

**‘Making amusement the vehicle of instruction’:
Key Developments in the Nursery Reading Market 1783-1900**

PhD Thesis

submitted by
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SIGNED DECLARATION 2

I, Lesley Jane Delaney confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

ABSTRACT

During the course of the nineteenth century children's early reading experience was radically transformed; late eighteenth-century children were expected to cut their teeth on morally improving texts, while Victorian children learned to read more playfully through colourful picturebooks. This thesis explores the reasons for this paradigm change through a study of the key developments in children's publishing from 1783 to 1900. Successively examining an amateur author, a commercial publisher, an innovative editor, and a brilliant illustrator with a strong interest in progressive theories of education, the thesis is alive to the multiplicity of influences on children's reading over the century.

Chapter One outlines the scope of the study. Chapter Two focuses on Ellenor Fenn's graded dialogues, *Cobwebs to catch flies* (1783), initially marketed as part of a reading scheme, which remained in print for more than 120 years. Fenn's highly original method of teaching reading through real stories, with its emphasis on simple words, large type, and high-quality pictures, laid the foundations for modern nursery books. Chapter Three examines John Harris, who issued a ground-breaking series of colour-illustrated rhyming stories and educational books in the 1810s, marketed as 'Harris's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction'. Chapter Four demonstrates the effect in the 1840s of 'Felix Summerly's Home Treasury of books and toys', through which Henry Cole set new standards for the design and illustration of children's books and established fairy tales and nursery rhymes as essential early reading. Chapter Five discusses the radical improvement in mass-market children's books from the mid-1860s, achieved through Walter Crane's experimental designs for cheap colour toy-books and quality baby-books, which popularised picturebook reading and took it into the classroom. Chapter Six offers a detailed study of the publishing history of *Cobwebs* to show how interest in this moral reader was sustained throughout the nineteenth century.

In memory of my father, David Hinton Manders
(14 June 1931-14 September 2011)

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Another benefit of the collaboration has been the opportunity to curate a small display focusing on an aspect of my research. 'Walter Crane: A Revolution in Nursery Picture Books' ran from November 2010 to April 2011 and showed Crane's use of art and design in children's education to an audience outside of academia. My special thanks go to Elizabeth James and her colleagues in the National Art Library, for the guidance they gave me in preparing the display and for general assistance during my studies. I made several gallery presentations relating to the Crane display, and was invited to give a talk to the Children's Books History Society who published a revised transcript of the paper.

Other scholars were generous in sharing their research. At the outset of my project David Stoker and Karlijn Navest sent copies of their articles on Ellenor Fenn ahead of publication. My gratitude extends to the curators of the rare children's book

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Fig. 6.12 *Cobwebs* (George Routledge and Sons, [1879]), cover. © British Library Board 12809. aaa.59.

Fig. 6.13 *Cobwebs* (Crosby, Lockwood and Co., [1885]), cover. © British Library Board 12809. aaa.67.

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Fig. 6.15 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1805?]), I, frontispiece and title page. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1805 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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Fig. 6.20 *Cobwebs* (George Routledge and Sons, [1871]), frontispiece and title page. © British Library Board 12803.aaa.30.

Fig. 6.21 *Cobwebs*, I (John Marshall, [1805?]), John Bewick tailpiece, p. 35. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1805 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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Fig. 6.28 *Cobwebs*, I (Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1815), ‘The morning’, p. 22. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1815 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

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Fig. 6.30 *Cobwebs* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1852?]), ‘The morning’, p. 3. NAL 60.B.45. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 6.31 *Cobwebs* (Darton & Co., 1858), ‘The morning’, p. 12. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1858 (REN).
Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 6.32 *Cobwebs* (Crosby, Lockwood and Co., [1885]), ‘The morning’, p. 12. Copy from my own collection.

Fig. 6.33 *Cobwebs* (George Routledge and Sons, [1871]), ‘The morning’. © British Library Board 12803.aaa.30.

Fig. 6.34 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne; NY: Scribner, Welford, and Co., [ca. 1870]), ‘The morning’. BI LOV 1870. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books, Toronto, Canada.

Fig. 6.35 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne, [1894?]), ‘The morning’. BI LOV 1894. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books, Toronto, Canada.

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Fig. 6.37 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [ca. 1790; 1794?]), I, inscription. NAL 60.Z.189 (c). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Fig. 6.38 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [17--?; 1794?]), II, title page. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]

Fig. 6.39 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [17--?; 1794?]), II, inscription. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]

ABBREVIATIONS

BL	British Library
CCCL	<i>The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature</i> , ed. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
CUP	Cambridge University Press
Darton	F. J. Harvey Darton, <i>Children's Books in England</i> , 3rd edn rev. Brian Alderson (London: BL; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1982; repr. 1999)
ECCO	Eighteenth Century Books Online, accessed via < http://find.galegroup.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/ecco/ >
<i>Easter Art Annual</i>	Walter Crane, 'The Work of Walter Crane with Notes by the Artist', <i>The Art Journal Easter Art Annual</i> (London J. S. Virtue & Co., 1898)
ESTC	English Short Title Catalogue
<i>Imprint</i>	Walter Crane, 'Notes on My Own Books for Children', <i>The Imprint</i> , 1:2 (1913), 81-86
Moon	Majorie Moon, <i>John Harris's Books for Youth 1801-1843: A Checklist</i> (Cambridge, Printed for Moon and Spilman in Association with Five Owls Press, 1976)
IOE	Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London
ODNB	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> online edn, OUP, accessed via < http://oxforddnb.com.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/ >
ODNR	<i>The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes</i> , ed. Iona and Peter Opie, new edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997; first publ. 1951)
OCCL	Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, <i>The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature</i> (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999; first publ. 1884)
OUP	Oxford University Press

NY	New York
TPL OC	Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books
V&A	The Victoria and Albert Museum, London
V&A (CER)	V&A Ceramics
V&A NAL	V&A National Art Library
V&A NAL (LB)	V&A NAL The Guy Little Bequest
V&A NAL (QM)	V&A NAL Queen Mary Gift
V&A NAL (REN)	V&A NAL Renier Collection of Historic and Contemporary Books for Children
V&A (P&D)	V&A Prints and Drawings

The place of publication of all titles cited in footnotes is London, unless otherwise stated. Full imprint details are given in Works Cited.

All pre-1800 primary works are typed with minimum capitalisation. In order to achieve consistency in entries for new editions up to the present day, minimum capitalisation has been applied to all children's books, with the exception of edited collections and anthologies. Some longer titles have been abbreviated in footnotes, but are listed in full in Works Cited.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

‘In making amusement the vehicle of instruction,
consists the grand secret of early education’¹

In the period between the 1780s and the end of the nineteenth century children’s early reading experience at home was radically transformed. Children in the Age of Enlightenment typically were offered morally improving first readers, while the children of late Victorian parents were encouraged to learn to read more playfully through colourful picturebooks.² The precept of the late eighteenth-century writer Ellenor Fenn – that the ‘grand secret of early education’ was to make it entertaining – remained a guiding principle for many writers, artists and publishers throughout the nineteenth century, but how can we account for the fundamental difference in books created at the beginning and the end of the period? In this thesis I examine key developments in the production of primers and first readers to determine what triggered this dramatic change of approach to teaching young children to read at home.³

My thesis is focused on how and why certain books came to be adopted as suitable literature for three- to eight-year-olds, who were either learning to read or becoming independent readers, and the means by which these books were marketed to parents. Fables, rhymes, fairy tales and domestic stories all became a common feature of nursery literature, but in what ways did writers and artists consider them a suitable ‘vehicle of instruction’, and to what extent did shifting cultural conceptions of ‘amusement’ determine the type of literature from which children learned to read?

1 Ellenor Fenn (Mrs Teachwell), *The rational dame: or, hints towards supplying prattle for children* (London: John Marshall and Co., [1790?]), p. iv. In subsequent footnote citations, books published in London will omit the place of publication, except where there is a dual location. Some long titles have been abbreviated, but appear in full in the list of works cited.

2 I use the term ‘picturebook’ to mean a children’s book that predominantly uses pictures to help a child to read, or interpret the text. For the concept of the modern picturebook and the difficulties of definition, see the introduction to David Lewis, *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks* (London and NY: RoutledgeFalmer, 2001), pp. xiii-xvi.

3 My definition of ‘nursery’ is consistent with the *Oxford English Dictionary* listing of a place for nursing or fostering: ‘A room or area of a house set aside for babies and young children, esp. for those in the care of a nursemaid; a child’s bedroom or playroom.’ <http://dictionary.oed.com> [accessed 28 February 2012]. It does not refer to nursery schools unless specified.

Which books proved most popular with the parents buying reading material for their children, and did the creators of nursery books consciously address a dual audience of adult and child? Most importantly, I explore how and why pictures became an essential feature of books for very young children.

The period featured (1783-1900) runs from the launch of the first specially illustrated reading scheme through to the publication of a groundbreaking series of picturebooks that promoted visual literacy (the ability to interpret meaning through pictures). It saw a sharp rise in the number of books produced for children of all ages.⁴ Books, along with toys and games, had become marketable commodities, as Janis Dawson's study of juvenile consumerism shows.⁵ The origins and developments of the children's publishing market have been traced in chronological or themed histories; however, although books for young children are frequently mentioned within these studies, nursery books are rarely closely examined as a separate category of the market. Joyce Irene Whalley's wide-ranging review of illustrated books for the nursery and schoolroom from 1700 to 1900, for example, includes only brief chapters dedicated to 'alphabet', 'reading' and 'grammar' books.⁶ The fact that reading books were labelled as suitable for three- to eight-year-olds from the late eighteenth century onwards offers clear evidence that publishers had identified that a specific nursery sector could be developed within the children's book trade; this deserves more investigation. I will be assessing whether publishers were responding to parental demand for books to teach young children to read, or stimulating interest through calculated marketing ploys.

The books selected for each chapter are not directly comparable, but are designed

4 Eliot notes that by the end of the nineteenth century the number of titles across all publishing categories was 'substantially greater than at the beginning'; 'Juvenile Fiction' increased from a 16.2% share of the market in the period 1814-1846 to 30.1% in the period 1900-1909; 'Education' (which may include books for children) decreased from 11.8% to 8.4% in the same time period, suggesting that category definitions may have changed. See Simon Eliot, 'Some Trends in British Book Production 1800-1919', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 19-43 (p. 28; table 2.1, p. 37).

5 Janis Dawson, 'Trade and Plumb-Cake in Lilliput: The Origins of Juvenile Consumerism and Early English Children's Periodicals', *Children's Literature in Education*, 29 (1998), 175-98 (p. 175).

6 Joyce Irene Whalley, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: Illustrated Books for the Nursery and Schoolroom 1700-1900* (London: Elek Books, 1974). See Chapter 2: 'Alphabet Books', pp. 26-37; Chapter 3: 'Reading Books', pp. 38-46; Chapter 11: 'Grammar', pp. 123-6.

to be representative of significant developments in styles of first reading books marketed for use in the home nursery. The term ‘nursery book’ is used to refer to any text intended as first reading for children up to the age of eight, including books of instruction and entertaining works. The sample is not limited, therefore, to educational texts specifically designed to teach reading; it extends to domestic stories, nursery rhymes and songs, fairy tales, poetry, humorous verse, nonsense rhymes, adaptations of classical literature and picture books, in order to show how the introduction of these forms over the course of the period broadened the scope of nursery publishing, creating a discrete sector within the children’s market.

Thesis statement

In this thesis I argue that four key developments were instrumental in creating the paradigm shift that established picture books as the dominant form of nursery reading: first, the commercialisation of home-reading material incorporating visual aids (the validation of practical home-teaching methods); second, the rise of mass-market publishing (the widespread dissemination of books through popular series); third, the development of a discrete canon, or ‘tradition’, of nursery literature (establishing the reputation of suitable reading material for young children); and fourth, the implementation of high standards of design and illustration in children’s books (quality control of publications for a discerning middle-class market).

These developments were not mutually exclusive, nor directly linear in progression. My study supports the contention of Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose that ‘books are made by history’; it will demonstrate that a rich blend of social, cultural and economic forces combined to create the circumstances in which new forms of early reading material flourished.⁷ Authors, illustrators, designers, editors, publishers, printers and booksellers all contributed in various ways to bring about revolutionary changes in the style of children’s books, often experimenting with new technology to raise standards or to create innovative styles of publication. In order to bring to light the interrelationship of all the agents concerned with the trade in nursery literature I will be exploring the motivation and roles of the writers, artists and

⁷ *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (Malden MA; Oxford; Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 1.

publishers who created and marketed books designed to teach young children. Robert Darnton stresses the importance of examining the ‘entire communications process’, because the ‘parts do not take on their full significance unless they are related to the whole’; he has created a diagram to envisage the connections between creators, distributors and consumers, which he calls the ‘communications circuit’.⁸ The first reading book, however simple it may appear, is a complex repository of information about childhood in the period, as well as about the aims of the creators, publishers and purchasers of children’s books.

These wide-ranging concerns have necessitated a cross-disciplinary approach to my research, embracing literature, social and cultural history, the history of education, art history, as well as the history of the book, which draws on theories of cultural materialism. The book-historian D. F. McKenzie describes this eclectic and historically referential method as ‘bibliography as a study of the sociology of texts’.⁹ He suggests that one of the greatest strengths of this theoretical perspective is the access it gives to social motives through its examination of the ‘facts of transmission and the material evidence of reception’.¹⁰ The children’s literature historian M. O. Grenby similarly expounds the process of interrogating the ‘aggregation’ of different kinds of evidence:

This conversation between producers and consumers, between theorists, practitioners and end-users, can only be explored by juxtaposing as many different sources of evidence as possible.¹¹

These cross-referential methods of investigation have informed my approach to

8 Darnton’s circular diagram begins with the author and ends with the reader, and includes all agents concerned with production, distribution and reception of the book; he incorporates a Venn diagram to show the overlap of the intellectual, economic and political forces that also influence book production. Robert Darnton, ‘What is the History of Books?’, in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleary, 2nd edn (Abingdon and NY: Routledge, 2006; repr. 2010), 9-26 (p. 11 and diagram p. 12).

9 D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 13. McKenzie defines ‘texts’ to include all forms of material transmission (p. 13) and applies Herbert Spencer’s 1873 definition to describe ‘sociology’: ‘Sociology has to recognize truths of social development, structure and function’ (p. 14).

10 Ibid., pp. 28-9. See also John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten, ‘Introduction: Publishing History as Hypertext’, in *Literature in the Marketplace*, ed. Jordan and Patten, pp. 1-18.

11 M. O. Grenby, ‘Delightful Instruction? Assessing Children’s Use of Educational Books in the Long Eighteenth Century’, in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain*, ed. Mary Hilton and Jill Shefrin (Farnham and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 181-98 (pp. 197, 198).

this study.

Each of the chapters in this thesis highlights the most significant development in children's reading occurring in a twenty-five-year time span, roughly corresponding to a generation in middle-class families. My study examines the evolution of nursery literature with reference to the broad developments in children's literature set out by F. J. Harvey Darton in his scholarly survey of the genre (first published in 1932): the shift from morality to levity in the period 1780-1820; the discourse surrounding evangelical and secular literature in the early Victorian period; the emergence of more playful and subversive literature in the latter part of the Victorian era.¹² However, I do not subscribe to the view that these developments simply represent a struggle for dominance between rationalist and fantasy literature. In tracing the number of different ways that amusement could be construed as the 'vehicle of instruction', my thesis will demonstrate that common ideals link the moral literature of the late eighteenth-century rationalists with that of Victorian writers and artists, even though they appear to be ideologically distinct. In this respect, my argument shares similarities with Andrew O'Malley's study, *The Making of the Modern Child*, in which he concludes that the groundwork for the "'golden age," Victorian construction of childhood as a period of wonder, playful nonsense, and uninhibited imagination' was laid in late eighteenth-century children's literature.¹³ I shall show that the characteristics commonly associated with modern nursery books were introduced and consolidated during the course of the period: large type with good spacing, high-quality colour illustration and design, (the physical characteristics);

12 F. J. Harvey Darton, *Children's Books in England*, 3rd edn rev. Brian Alderson (London: BL; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 1999); first publ. CUP, 1932) (hereafter, Darton). For other chronologically arranged histories see Peter Hunt, *An Introduction to Children's Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1994); *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*, ed. Peter Hunt and others (Oxford and NY: OUP, 1995); Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic: Children's Literature in England from Its Beginnings to 1839* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989); Percy Muir, *English Children's Books 1600-1900* (B. T. Batsford, 1985; first publ. 1954); Mary Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure in Reading*, 2nd edn (London: The Library Association, 1972, first publ. 1963); Joyce Irene Whalley and Tessa Rose Chester, *A History of Children's Book Illustration* (John Murray with the V&A, 1988). For themed or genre histories see Brian Alderson and Felix de Marez Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise: Origins of Children's Book Publishing in England, 1650-1850* (London: BL; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2006); M. O. Grenby, *Children's Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Whalley, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies* (1974); *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, ed. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge and NY: CUP, 2009) (hereafter, CCCL).

13 Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (London and NY: Routledge, 2003), p. 135. See also Andrew O'Malley, 'The Coach and Six: Chapbook Residue in Late Eighteenth-Century Children's Literature', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 24 (2000), 18-44.

simple words, rhymes, humour (the mode of telling the story); fairy tales, fables, nursery rhymes, domestic stories and fantasy stories (the type of literary vehicle). As Andrea Immel observes, the form of a children's book is 'inextricably bound up with cultural constructs of childhood'; 'constructs are dynamic concepts that evolve over time', she maintains.¹⁴ It is the manifestation of 'amusement as the vehicle of instruction' in the shape of the book, therefore, that reveals most about the concept of childhood that informed its manufacture.

My main approach has been to make detailed analysis of the first readers and primers that appeared in popular series, as I suggest that books needed to be marketed in a highly organised system of related or similar books, in order to set trends and influence radical developments in the nursery market. From this evidence, it is possible to suggest some reasons for change. In his general introduction to *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*, Grenby points up the difficulties inherent in applying the term 'popular' to children's literature, but I concur with his view that the most useful way to define popularity may be in relation to high sales, even though this still raises questions about how we assess the accuracy of publishers' figures and what number constitutes a 'high' sale at a given time.¹⁵ Grenby suggests the reasons for the popularity of a book may be divided into three basic categories: 'the textual' (some special quality present that accounts for its appeal); the 'contextual' (good timing of publishing); and 'the paratextual' (the various ways in which a text is physically configured in a book to make it appealing).¹⁶ These categories are pertinent to my own observation of the growth of the nursery market, which will show that originality, anticipation of demand and experimentation with new material forms were key factors, particularly in relation to the increasing importance of the illustrated book throughout the period.

Social, cultural and political context

It is commonly accepted that the market for children's books took off when John

¹⁴ Andrea Immel, 'Children's Books and Constructions of Childhood', in *CCCL*, ed. Grenby and Immel, 19-34 (pp. 19, 20).

¹⁵ M. O. Grenby, 'General Introduction', in *Popular Children's Literature in Britain*, ed. Julia Briggs, Dennis Butts and M. O. Grenby (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1-20 (pp. 1-5).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-17.

Newbery set up his specialist publishing house in the 1740s; however, the precise origins of the trade in nursery literature are somewhat difficult to determine, as it is evident that even before commercial children's publishing was established parents appropriated a variety of sources of published material to teach their children to read.¹⁷ Moreover, it cannot be assumed that the advent of published literature for children gives us clear evidence of how children learned to read; two significant contributions to *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, Writing and Childhood 1600-1900*, a wide-ranging collection of essays from contemporary scholars, demonstrate that the boundary between pre- and post-commercial children's publishing is blurred, because some mothers continued to produce home-made teaching aids even when published works became available. Shirley Brice Heath and Victor Watson provide illuminating descriptions of the home-made books, lesson-cards and games that Jane Johnson (1706-1759), a genteel woman married to a Buckinghamshire clergyman, devised to teach her children to read in the 1740s, at exactly the point that Newbery launched the first of his specialist titles for children, *A little pretty pocket-book*.¹⁸ Watson suggests that Jane Johnson may have used Newbery's title as inspiration for one of her own children's story books, as she calls it 'A very pretty story to tell children when they are about five or six years of age'; Jane Johnson even fashioned her miniature books and cards using the same style of Dutch gilt paper used to bind the Newbery titles, which further suggests her familiarity with his books.¹⁹ (Figures 1.1-1.3 show examples of the miniature books, word cards, and alphabets that Jane Johnson produced for her nursery library.) More recently, Evelyn Arizpe, Morag Styles and Shirley Brice Heath have added further insights into the social and cultural influences for Jane Johnson's imaginative literacy

17 See, for example: Gillian Avery, 'The Beginnings of Children's Reading to c. 1700', and Margaret Kinnell, 'Publishing for Children 1700-1780', in *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*, ed. Hunt and others, 1-25, 26-45 respectively; Muir, *English Children's Books*, 23-35; Margaret Spufford, 'Women Teaching Reading to Poor Children in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *Opening the Nursery Door: Reading, Writing and Childhood 1600-1900*, ed. Mary Hilton, Morag Styles and Victor Watson (London and NY: Routledge, 1997), 47-62; Darton, pp. 9-84.

18 See Shirley Brice Heath, 'Child's Play or Finding the Ephemera of Home', and Victor Watson, 'Jane Johnson: A Very Pretty Story to Tell Children', in *Opening the Nursery Door*, ed. Hilton, Styles and Watson, 17-30, 31-46.

19 Watson, 'Jane Johnson: A Very Pretty Story to Tell Children', p. 32.



Figs. 1.1-1.3 'George Johnson his Book' (1745), cover with Dutch paper (8.5 x 5.3 cm), leaf 15 verso and (below) a selection of the reading materials created by Jane Johnson for her children (detail). All Johnson, J. mss, ca. 1740-1759, Collection no. LMC 1649. Courtesy Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.



material, published in *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century*.²⁰ Arizpe and Styles demonstrate that even before the commercialisation of children's literature, the teaching of reading was a serious concern. They suggest that the Johnson family would have spent as much as two hours a day on literacy-related activities, and that Jane probably began to teach her children to read as soon as they could talk.²¹

We might speculate that Jane Johnson could have become a published writer had she been creating her reading material at a later time. Watson underlines the importance of oral and homemade literacy material produced by mothers:

It is likely that what occurred in the eighteenth century was not the 'beginning' of children's literature but the emergence into public scrutiny (literally the *publication*) of a traditional private and domestic nursery-culture ...²²

My research takes as its starting point this critical juncture in the history of children's reading, when amateur writers were brought into the publishing sphere in the generation following that of Jane Johnson. I begin with the publication of a set of homemade reading books and games that show many similarities with the teaching material she produced, in order to underline the involvement of mothers at the inception of the nursery market. Ellenor Fenn's reading books, spelling books and educational games show that, like Jane Johnson, she was fully engaged in the teaching of the children in her care. However, as will be shown in Chapter Two, Fenn was also committed to finding a wider audience for her teaching materials; she wanted her works to be printed and sold for public consumption.

It has been suggested that the development of educational literature for children parallels the rise of the entrepreneurial middle class during the industrial revolution.

20 Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles with Shirley Brice Heath, *Reading Lessons from the Eighteenth Century: Mothers, Children and Texts* (Shenstone: Pied Piper Publishing, 2006). The Jane Johnson archives in the Bodleian Library, Oxford University (which holds the manuscript for 'A very pretty story') and the Lilly Library, University of Indiana have inspired other scholars to focus on the socio-cultural context of children's reading and to reflect on how this might inform our study of modern reading practice. See also the collection of essays *Acts of Reading: Teachers, Texts and Childhood*, ed. Morag Styles and Evelyn Arizpe (Stoke on Trent and Sterling, VA: Trentham Books, 2009). Brian Alderson examines Jane Johnson's educational material in 'New Playthings and Gigantick Histories: The Nonage of English Children's Books', *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 60 (1999), 178-95.

21 Arizpe and Styles, *Reading Lessons*, pp. 59, 77.

22 Watson, 'Jane Johnson: A Very Pretty Story to Tell Children', p. 45.

Andrew O'Malley notes that education, religion and the family were the key focus of the middle classes' efforts to distinguish themselves from other classes, and he asserts that children's literature 'became one of the crucial mechanisms for disseminating and consolidating middle-class ideology'.²³ Alan Richardson, in his study of the effects of the rise of literacy between 1780 and 1832, similarly notes that the innovative child-centred pedagogy of the period facilitated and attempted 'to guarantee the subject's participation in an increasingly regulated society'.²⁴ Children's education thus presented astute publishers with a commercial opportunity; families needed to invest in teaching materials that would prepare their children for their role in the expanding capitalist economy.

Teaching methods employed in upper-class homes were adopted as the model for families of the enlarging entrepreneurial middle classes, with boys being educated at home with their sisters until they were sent to school at the age of seven or eight.²⁵ Writing in a parenting manual, published in 1753, James Nelson notes: 'When a man becomes a Father of a Family he usually applies the Boys, as soon as he deems them of an Age for it, to School Learning.'²⁶ Later in the same book – in a passage plagiarised in Rest Knipe's 1783 book on children's education – Nelson asserts: 'I think that very little Account is to be made of what they can learn before seven Years old: it is commonly Rote work and often forgot almost as soon as learned'.²⁷ Such clear demarcation in the public arena of a father's responsibility to take command of his son's education usually meant that mothers were left to arrange children's early education in the home, along with that of older girls. The Rev. John Bennett's treatise on women's education, published in 1787, indicates that it was a social obligation for the mother to become the '*preceptress* of her children',

23 O'Malley, *Making of the Modern Child*, pp. 4, 11.

24 Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice 1780-1832* (Cambridge, CUP, 2004; first publ. 1994), p. 30.

25 Arizpe and Styles, *Reading Lessons*, p. 5.

26 James Nelson, *An essay on the government of children, under three general heads: viz. health, manners and education* (Printed for R. & J. Dodsley, 1753), p. 24.

27 Nelson, p. 297. Rest Knipe, *A course of lectures: containing remarks upon the government and education of children, thoughts upon the present plan of education, and an essay on elocution* (Edinburgh: the Author, 1783), p. 144. In his third Lecture, 'The Education of Children', Knipe copies and paraphrases Nelson's earlier work without crediting his source.

so that she could supervise their moral education ‘in the interests of society’.²⁸ This discourse linking the education of children by mothers with the future hopes of the nation, is also evident in John Burton’s 1793 *Lectures on female education and manners*, in which he concludes: ‘political Government may be said to derive from the strength of the nursery’.²⁹ The comments from both Bennett and Burton suggest that home learning was socially and politically driven.

It was increasingly agreed by educationists that the usual practice of leaving very young children to the care of uneducated nursemaids and servants was unsatisfactory if the minds of children were to be correctly shaped for the nation. Mary Hilton’s study of women’s role as educators views education as a cultural practice, and the concept of ‘rational or enlightened domesticity’ (coined by Jill Shefrin) in the period leading up to 1800 provides the focus for two recent collections of essays, including those by Michèle Cohen, M. O. Grenby, Carol Percy, and William McCarthy.³⁰ However, the ability of a mother to supervise her children’s early learning was not an innate social skill, but one that needed to be encouraged. Effective teaching would require a basic knowledge of core subjects, such as grammar, which a young mother might not have been taught herself. Children’s reading books, therefore, needed to be laid out as lessons that a mother could easily follow and had to inspire her with a belief in her ability to teach, as I outline in Chapter Two. In addition, if mothers were to shape the future nation, the books must impart middle-class values. As J. H. Plumb observes,

28 The Rev. John Bennett’s *Strictures on female education* (1787), cited in M. O. Grenby, ‘The Origins of Children’s Literature’, in *CCCL*, ed. Grenby and Immel, 3-18 (p. 10).

29 John Burton, cited in Michèle Cohen, *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in the Eighteenth Century* (London and NY: Routledge, 1996), p. 68. In Chapter 5, ‘The Accomplishment of the Eighteenth-Century Lady’, Cohen argues that the ‘public’, ‘private’ and ‘domestic’ arenas were ‘mutually constituted and reconstituted’ during the period (p. 66).

30 Jill Shefrin, “‘Governesses to Their Children’: Royal and Aristocratic Mothers Educating Daughters’, in *Childhood and Children’s Books in Early Modern Europe, 1550-1800*, ed. Andrea Immel and Michael Whitmore (NY and Abingdon: Routledge, 2006; repr. 2009), 181-211 (p. 181). See in the same volume William McCarthy, ‘Performance, Pedagogy, and Politics’, 261-76. Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation’s Young: Education and Public Doctrine in Britain 1750-1850* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007). Michèle Cohen, “‘Familiar conversation’: The Role of the “Familiar Format” in Education in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century England’, in *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain*, ed. Hilton and Shefrin, 99-116. See in the same volume M. O. Grenby, ‘Delightful Instruction’, 181-98, and Carol Percy, ‘Learning and Virtue: English Grammar and the Eighteenth-Century Girls’ School’, 77-98.

[...] the new children's literature was designed to attract adults, to project an image of those virtues which parents wished to inculcate in their offspring, as well as beguile the child ... alphabet and reading books by their simplicity, also strengthened the confidence of parents in their ability to teach their children to read in the home.³¹

The new children's literature in the eighteenth century was, therefore, aimed at the young 'but only through the refraction of the parental eye', Plumb concludes. O'Malley suggests that a 'new technology of control in the raising and management of children' emerged with this new view of childhood, which is evident in the proliferation of writing for and about children using a "“real-life” biographical style'.³² This 'real-life' style is also evident in the introduction of the 'dialogic' form in nursery literature, which similarly incorporates behavioural examples in children's stories intended for the enlightenment of parents.³³

Context of literacy discourse

Undoubtedly the greatest influence on children's early education in the eighteenth century came from the writing of John Locke.³⁴ As I show in my examination of Fenn's pedagogy, his theories concerning the plasticity of young minds, the need for literature to instil certain virtues, and the importance of making learning an amusing task, which he expressed in *Some thoughts concerning education* (1693), were widely adopted in the eighteenth century. In his study of Locke's influence on children's books, Samuel Pickering observes:

[...] the educational writings of "the great Mr. *Locke*" were practically biblical. Everyone interested in education read the texts, and almost all were true believers.³⁵

31 J. H. Plumb cited in Arizpe and Styles, *Reading Lessons*, p. 64.

32 O'Mally notes the style in both paediatric and educational texts, such as William Buchan's *Advice to Mothers* (1804) and the Edgeworth's *Practical education* (1798), as well as children's books, such as Mary Pilkington's *Biography for girls; or, Moral instructive examples, for young ladies* (1799), or Mary Wollstonecraft's *Original stories from real life* (1788). See *The Making of the Modern Child*, pp. 12-13.

33 See Chapter Two.

34 See Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, 2nd edn (Harlow; NY: Pearson Longman, 2005; first publ. 2002). Cunningham suggests that Locke laid out the 'blueprint' for the education of capitalist man with his ideas about the denial of gratification (p. 60).

35 Samuel F. Pickering, Jr., *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1985, first publ. 1981), p. 9.

As Immel suggests, Locke's remarks on children's books have 'cast a very long shadow', and the 'notion of an "easy pleasant book suited to his capacity" still works as a standard for the evaluation of contemporary children's books'.³⁶ However, as Immel's elegantly contrived fiction of a conversation between Locke and a twenty-first century woman highlights, even if the notion of an 'easy pleasant book' has relevance for both parties, Locke's ideas need to be viewed within the social and cultural context of seventeenth-century teaching methods.³⁷ The idea of 'amusement' thus has to be considered as a shifting cultural concept.

Although my study is primarily concerned with the teaching of reading in middle-class homes, it is important to situate the research within the context of public discourse about literacy across all classes, as it will be shown that there was a two-way exchange of useful literature across social strata, as well as between nursery and schoolroom. Reading was widely viewed as a valuable skill that would facilitate future learning and job prospects, as well as a vehicle that could be used to engineer social change.³⁸ Gretchen R. Galbraith links child literacy with Britain's social, economic and political transformation in her social study of reading.³⁹ David Vincent's study of working-class literacy similarly underlines that, as for the middle classes, the spread of literacy was 'closely bound up with the economic and social transformation of the Industrial Revolution', but he reminds us that 'children's literature was largely out of the reach of working class families'.⁴⁰ This point is underlined in the introduction to William Mavor's spelling book when he notes 'a Spelling Book frequently constitutes the whole library of a poor child, unless when charity puts a Bible into its hands'.⁴¹

36 Andrea Immel, 'Children's Books and Constructions of Childhood', in *CCCL*, ed. Grenby and Immel, p. 28.

37 *Ibid.*, pp. 31-4.

38 For a Marxist perspective of the way that the changing economic state changed views of childhood, see chapter seven, 'An Upbringing Fit for Society: Marx and Dewey', in John Cleverley and D. C. Phillips, *Visions of Childhood: Influential models from Locke to Spock*, rev. edn (NY: Teachers College Press, Columbia University, 1986; first publ. 1976), 97-113.

39 Gretchen R. Galbraith, *Reading Lives: Reconstructing Childhood, Books, and Schools in Britain, 1970-1920* (NY: St Martin's Press, 1997).

40 David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750-1914* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993; first publ. 1989), pp. 11, 61.

41 William Mavor, *The English Spelling Book*, rev. edn (Printed for Richard Phillips, 1803), p. 5.

The teaching of reading to the poor had become a concern of philanthropists setting up local charity schools and Sunday schools at the end of the eighteenth century, who wanted to provide education within a moral framework. The National and British and Foreign Schools Societies provided a more systematic replacement for this initiative from the beginning of the nineteenth century.⁴² The drive for literacy among the rapidly expanding working class population in industrial areas by pioneering socialist reformers such as Robert Owen (1771-1858), who introduced schooling for child workers in his Lanark cotton mill, and Samuel Wilderspin (1791-1866), who was instrumental in the formation of the Infant School Society, extended the campaign for regulated education.⁴³ This eventually resulted in the Factory Acts of 1833 (requiring employers of children to provide schooling) and the Elementary Education Act of 1870 (state-schooling for children between five and twelve years of age). The political effects of this literacy campaign have been well documented in the work of historians of education writing since the 1960s.⁴⁴ In her recent study of pictorial teaching material, Jill Shefrin notes that the ‘evolution of philanthropic educational organizations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially infant schools, was critical to the expansion of the market in printed teaching aids’.⁴⁵ Some teaching books produced by philanthropic educational organisations doubled as primers for domestic use and my survey includes some that fall within this category (see Chapter Six, in particular).

The history of children’s reading shows that there was always considerable debate

42 Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*, p. 75. Established in 1913 the BFSS grew out of the Royal Lancasterian Institution (established 1809), a dissenting organisation that introduced the system of monitors to assist teaching large classes in secular schools. Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education 1780-1870* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1960), p. 149.

43 Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*, 73-6.

44 See Brian Simon, *Studies in the History of Education*; Alec Ellis, *A History of Children’s Reading and Literature* (Oxford and London: Pergamon Press, 1968); G. S. Chalmers, *Reading Easy 1800-1850* (The Broadsheet King, 1976); Eric Midwinter, *Nineteenth Century Education* (Longman, 1970); Mary Sturt, *The Education of the People* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967); Nanette Whitbread, *The Evolution of the Nursery-Infant School, 1800-1970* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972; repr. 1975); *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Phillip McCann (Methuen, 1977), a collection of nine essays; Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture*; David F. Mitch, *The Rise of Popular Literacy in Victorian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 2nd edn (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998; first publ. 1957).

45 Jill Shefrin, “‘Adapted for and Used in Infants’ Schools, Nurseries, &c.”: Booksellers and the Infant School Market’, *Educating the Child in Enlightenment Britain*, ed. Hilton and Shefrin, 163-80 (p. 165). See also, Jill Shefrin, *The Dartons: Publishers of Educational Aids, Pastimes & Juvenile Ephemerata, 1787-1876* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Occasional Press, 2009).

on methods to teach reading. Hunter Diack traces the ‘*movement of ideas*’ that progressed from alphabetic methods (which dominated the first half of the nineteenth century), to phonic methods (predominant in the second half of the nineteenth century), through to whole word and sentence methods (adopted in the twentieth century), in order to give a historical perspective on twentieth-century methods of teaching, although he makes no mention of visual strategies.⁴⁶ Ian Michael’s detailed study of the English curriculum, which offers a more comprehensive analysis of the methods and teaching books used to teach reading up to 1870, observes that pictures were most closely associated with whole-word methods, to provide visual representation of words.⁴⁷ It is not within the remit of this study to assess the effectiveness of different *methods of teaching reading* in this manner; however, the effect of educational theory on the *production of early literature* will be examined.

Visual strategies were not a new phenomenon, of course. The earliest known English pictorial alphabet appeared in John Hart’s *A method or comfortable beginning for all unlearned*, published in 1570.⁴⁸ The *Orbus sensualium pictus*, a pictorial encyclopaedia first published in England in 1659, had been specifically devised by Johann Amos Comenius to aid a child’s understanding of Latin instruction through pictorial representations of objects; in his preface, the translator Charles Hoole highlights the benefits of illustration in attracting children to learn: ‘children (even from their infancy almost) are delighted with Pictures and willingly please their eyes with these sights’.⁴⁹ Hornbooks, the typical means by which children familiarised themselves with the alphabet from as early as the fifteenth century, were rarely decorated with pictures (Fig. 1.4).⁵⁰ However, religious stories and books of fables produced during the first half of the eighteenth century, along

46 Hunter Diack, *In Spite of the Alphabet* (Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 177.

47 Ian Michael, *The Teaching of English: From the Sixteenth Century to 1870* (Cambridge and NY: CUP, 2005; first publ. 1987), p.118. For reading, spelling and pronunciation skills, see the second and third chapters, pp. 14-134.

48 Cited in Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *The Oxford Companion to Children’s Literature* (Oxford and NY: OUP, 1999; first publ. 1984), p. 2 (hereafter, *OCCL*).

49 Charles Hoole, ‘The Translator, to all judicious and industrious School-Masters’, ‘Preface’, in Joh. Amos Comenii, *Orbis sensualium pictus*, trans. Charles Hoole, 12th edn (Printed for S. Leacroft, 1777).

50 Sometimes called the ‘Criss-Cross-Row’, the paddle shaped hand-held board (typically 23 x 12 cm) had a piece of paper stuck to one side printed with the alphabet (sometimes with nine digits, the Lord’s prayer, and syllabary), covered with a sheet of horn for protection. See Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 4. Examples have been found in a range of styles and materials (including pewter and silver), which are detailed by Andrew W. Tuer in *The History of the Horn Book* (NY: Arno Press, 1979; first publ. 1897).



Fig. 1.4 Ivory Hornbook, [England? 17--?]), front and back. Cotsen Children's Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library. Item in process no. 3875755. Pictures Princeton University Library.



Fig. 1.5 Bowles & Carver 'lottery' prints (late eighteenth-century).



Fig. 1.6 *The child's own battledoor* (Darton & Harvey, [1798]). NAL 60.Z.404. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

with battledores containing illustrated alphabets, demonstrate that pictures were considered a valuable means to attract children to read (Fig. 1.6).⁵¹ John Bunyan's *Divine emblems: or, temporal things spiritulized. Fitted for the use of boys and girls*, for example, was 'adorn'd with cuts suitable to every subject'.⁵² Styles and Arizpe note that the use of pictures 'became an important educational device supported by Locke, Fénelon, Watts, Rollin and others' and suggest that publishers capitalised on the new emphasis on visual culture with the publication of sheets of small prints, known as 'lotteries', which children could cut out and play with (Fig. 1.5).⁵³ Jane Johnson used lottery prints to create educational devices for her children and Fenn also used them to illustrate her stories and word cards.⁵⁴

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss the development of nursery literature in America and Europe; however, it is interesting to note some shared characteristics and influences, particularly in relation to the use of pictures. The American nursery market similarly had its roots in religious instruction, being heavily influenced by the culture of the Puritan English settler, although, as Gillian Avery points up, the concept of 'a separate nursery world was a phenomenon peculiar to upper- and middle-class nineteenth century England'; in eighteenth-century America it was thought that a leisured nursery environment was 'wrong-headed' and children were quickly assimilated into the adult sphere.⁵⁵ The bible was popular as a source of home reading, as was *The New England primer*, a Puritan book of instruction first published in the 1680s, which appeared in many illustrated versions and editions

51 The battledore, introduced in the mid-eighteenth century, was a folded card printed with an illustrated alphabet, sometimes including prayers, rhymes and proverbs. Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 5.

52 John Bunyan, *Divine emblems: or, Temporal things spiritulized (sic). Fitted for the use of boys and girls*, 9th edn (Printed for John Marshall, 1724).

53 Arizpe and Styles, *Reading lessons*, p. 62. Sometimes referred to as 'catchpenny prints', sold coloured, or plain for colouring. See Sheila O'Connell, *The Popular Print in England* (British Museum Press, 1999), pp. 32-33. See also, Bowles & Carver, *Catchpenny Prints: 163 Popular Engravings from the Eighteenth Century Originally Published by Bowles & Carver* (NY: Dover Publications, 1970). Immel describes the scrapbook of a five-year-old boy, created using common prints published by Bowles & Carver, in Andrea Immel, 'Frederick Lock's Scrapbook: Patterns in the Pictures and Writing in the Margins', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 29.1 (2004), 65-85.

54 Arizpe and Styles, *Reading Lessons*, p. 87.

55 Gillian Avery, *Behold the Child: American Children and their Books 1621-1922* (London: The Bodley Head, 1994), p. 8.

throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁵⁶ However, although American writers helped to build the publishing industry from the outset, the majority of children's books up to the late 1820s were either reprints or edited versions of English titles.⁵⁷ Thereafter, an American tradition of children's books began to develop with moral writers such as Samuel Goodrich ('Peter Parley') leading the field and subsequently exerting influence on the development of the English market (see Chapter Four).⁵⁸

The origins of children's literature in France and Germany also had their inception in the eighteenth century; however, apart from versions of *Æsop's fables*, there was little shared literature (undoubtedly because of the language barrier) until the fairy tales of Charles Perrault and the brothers Grimm began to appear in English versions.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, it is clear that similar ideas about childhood and educational philosophy helped to shape approaches to learning: Locke's *Some thoughts concerning education* was translated into French in 1695, and along with Rousseau was influential in Germany, stimulating interest in the use of pictures in early learning. Comenius's *Orbus sensualium pictus* similarly encouraged visual approaches.

56 See Anne Scott MacLeod, 'Children's Literature in America from the Puritan Beginnings to 1870', in *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*, ed. Hunt and others, 102-29 (pp. 103-4). For the early development of the American market see Part One: 'Ties with England', in Avery, *Behold the Child*, pp. 13-62. See also Patricia Crain, *The Story of A: The Alphabetization of America from the New England Primer to The Scarlet Letter*, particularly chapter one: 'Alphabetical Order: The Genre of the Alphabet from the Christ-Cross Row to *The New England Primer*' (pp. 15-52).

57 According to MacLeod, the great majority of 'serious-minded' works for children were reprints or edited versions of English titles and John Newbery's books were both pirated and emulated by the New York printer Hugh Gaine. She notes that American writers were published first in Massachusetts and then Boston. See 'Children's Literature in America', pp. 104-6. Abraham Rosenbach similarly suggests that Newbery's books 'gave the first genuine impetus' to the development of books written for the young in America, noting the printer Isaiah Thomas being his greatest imitator. See Abraham Rosenbach, *Early American Children's Books* (Portland, ME: The Southwold Press, 1933; repr. NY: Dover Publications, [1971]), p. xli. Many of the English titles are listed in his collectors' catalogue (including popular books published by Marshall and Harris featured in chapters Two and Three) and in D'Alté A. Welch, *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821* (Worcester, MA: American Antiquarian Society, 1972).

58 See Avery, *Behold the Child*, pp. 65-80.

59 For brief outlines of the history of French and German children's literature see Jean Perrot, 'France' and Hans-Heino Ewers, 'German Children's Literature from the Eighteen to the Twentieth Century', in the *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*, ed. Peter Hunt, 2nd edn (London and NY: Routledge, 2004), pp. 1045-51 and 1055-60, respectively. According to Seth Lerer, who notes Rouen as a centre for the children's book trade in the eighteenth century, 'virtually every early printer throughout Europe published an Aesop as one of their first volumes', indicating the shared roots of commercial children's literature. See his *Children's Literature: A Reader's History from Aesop to Harry Potter* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press [2008]), pp. 7-8.

I will examine the correlation between the introduction of more visual approaches to reading and advances in technology, in order to consider whether new means of production may have driven developments in the market.⁶⁰ Technological advances during the period made a dramatic impact, facilitating the rapid expansion of children's book publishing. For example, the introduction of increasingly sophisticated paper and print machinery permitted larger and cheaper print runs.⁶¹ Improved methods of production also presented publishers, writers and artists with opportunities to develop picture book reading. At the end of the eighteenth century, woodcuts were the cheapest means of illustrating children's books and finer copper plate engravings would only be included in more up-market publications. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the implementation of Thomas Bewick's method of producing wood engravings – using the hard cross-grain of the wood – enabled finer definition of line as well as more efficient reproduction, as the pictures could be printed with the type, and were more hard-wearing. At this point, publishers also began to produce hand-coloured versions of plain illustrations (the practice of employing children to colour the images in a production line is noted by many book historians), but the development of colour reproduction techniques eventually allowed cheap and efficient printing in colour.⁶² However, as Eliot points out, in examining developments in publishing there is 'always a danger in adopting a "whiggish" view of book history' and assuming that there was a 'steady rise of technology and sophistication' that swept aside earlier versions.⁶³ This observation also holds true for analysis of literary experiments: innovation introduced the possibility for development, but did not guarantee the widespread uptake of new styles of nursery literature. Many of the developments will be shown to be incremental.

60 For discussion of the conundrum of technological determinism, see the essays in *Does Technology Drive History?: The Dilemma of Technological Determinism*, ed. Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1996; first publ. 1994).

61 For a succinct overview of key developments in print and production technology see Rob Banham, 'The Industrialization of the Book 1800-1970', in *A Companion to the History of the Book*, ed. Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose (New Maldon, MA, Oxford and Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 273-90. For a more detailed study of the effects of paper and print mechanization, see Majorie Plant, *The English Book Trade: An Economic History of the Making and Sale of Books*, 2nd edn (Allen and Unwin, [1965]; first publ. 1939).

62 For the colouring production lines see, for example, Darton, p. 202.

63 Simon Eliot, 'History of the Book', in *The Handbook to Literary Research*, ed. Delia Da Sousa Correa and W. R. Owens, 2nd edn (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), 49-68 (p. 51).

Chapter outlines

My thesis examines four key innovators, whose experimental approaches to children's reading were instrumental in driving through the revolutionary changes necessary to create a market for picture book reading. The following four chapters examine the major shifts that propelled the publishing market towards production of more visually oriented reading material for the home nursery. In the final chapter, I provide a case study of a long-running title to highlight the dynamic effect of innovation on existing publications. This chronological approach has been adopted in order to demonstrate the shifts in style of literature. It is also intended to highlight the way that books can be designed to accommodate the social, cultural or economic circumstances of successive generations. Eliot describes this as the 'feedback loop built into the relationship between society and its books which ensures that one generation of books will have an influence on the context in which the next generation of books appears'.⁶⁴ In each chapter, I focus on an author, publisher, editor or artist who did more than any other individual of their generation to initiate key developments in the nursery market: the introduction of reading schemes; mass-market publishing strategies; establishing a canon of nursery literature; raising standards in the design and illustration of books for young children. However, it is not my intention to suggest that each innovator took up the baton from their predecessor; they each contributed in different ways to establish a diverse and thriving market in books for young children.

In Chapter Two I examine the impact of Ellenor, Lady Fenn (1743-1813), an amateur writer of the late eighteenth century known as 'Mrs Teachwell' and 'Mrs Lovechild', whose home-made books and games were marketed in the first commercial reading scheme for the nursery. Fenn believed that children should begin to learn to read from a very early age through specially designed books with large black type and simple words of one syllable, rather than through traditional school methods, which prescribed learning the alphabet and rehearsing syllabic tables in preparation for reading. Most significantly, she stressed the importance of attractive illustrations to help the child to visualise the narrative. As a well-educated genteel woman like Jane

64 Eliot, 'History of the Book', p. 49.

Johnson, Fenn drew on a wide range of theoretical and literary works in developing her graded system of teaching; she displayed missionary zeal in recruiting mothers to take control of their children's early reading in the nursery. Scholars have only recently begun to examine Fenn's prolific output and there is compelling evidence to suggest that she should be regarded as the most influential nursery-book writers of her generation. One of her earliest, and most popular titles became one of the longest running first readers in the history of children's literature. *Cobwebs to catch flies, or, dialogues suited to children from the age of three to eight* remained in print for more than one hundred and twenty years, thus helping generations of children to learn to read.⁶⁵

In Chapter Three I assess the contribution of the dynamic bookseller and publisher John Harris (1756-1846), who is widely acknowledged as one of the key figures in the history of illustrated children's books.⁶⁶ Harris cleverly anticipated demand for a more light-hearted approach to early learning in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, creating a specialist library of nursery books, seemingly in opposition to the moral rationalists' approach to early education. He created 'John Harris's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction' to promote experimental forms of early reading books, such as imaginative verse and comic tales, which children could read purely for pleasure. Many of his novel colour-illustrated books became trend-setting bestsellers, thus establishing a model for mass-market children's publishing.

Chapter Four explores the contribution of Henry Cole (1808-1882), aka 'Felix Summerly', who devised the 'Home Treasury' series of books, prints and educational toys to provide a complete home learning plan for the nursery. The innovative series, published in the 1840s, brought together traditional nursery songs, poetry, fairy tales and other time-honoured classics, such as fables and bible stories, thus helping to create a recognisable canon of nursery literature. The high-quality series harnessed the talents of the best artists and book craftsmen and was intended to stimulate children's aesthetic awareness as they learned to read. Cole's radical

⁶⁵ *Cobwebs to catch flies: or, Dialogues in short sentences adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. In two volumes...* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co, [1783]).

⁶⁶ See, for example, Darton, pp. 199-203; Muir, *English Children's Books*, p.100-2; Whalley and Chester, *A History of Children's Book Illustration*, pp. 35-43.

approach to children's books – his use of high art, experimentation with print and design, and the creation of the role of series editor – raised the status of children's publishing and set new standards for the design and illustration of nursery books.

In Chapter Five, I focus on the revolutionary effect of the artist and designer Walter Crane (1845-1915), who was one of the most prolific and influential children's illustrators of the mid- to late Victorian period. Crane believed that good art and design could stimulate children's interest in books and help them to read from a very early age. He extended Cole's vision for high-quality children's books by radically improving the design and illustration of cheap, mass-market picture books, known as 'toy' books. He also designed an innovative series of musical rhymes and fables for babies, as well as a ground-breaking set of fantasy stories that show how reading, writing and arithmetic could be learned through imaginative play. Crane's colourful, well-designed nursery books opened parents' eyes to the educational value of picturebook reading and influenced the use of pictures in school reading schemes. Critical evaluation of Crane's nursery books will highlight the educational theories that underpinned his designs and suggest that he was the most significant children's book creators of his generation, influencing not only how children learned to read at home, but the method by which they were taught in schools.

In the sixth and final chapter I explore the reasons for the enduring popularity of Ellenor Fenn's long-running graded reader *Cobwebs*, in order to demonstrate the cumulative effect of market developments in creating new styles of nursery books. McKenzie suggests that the 'social, economic and political motivations of publishing, the reasons why texts were written and read, as they were, why they were rewritten and redesigned, or allowed to die' is central to study of the history of the book.⁶⁷ The remarkable history of *Cobwebs* highlights an anomaly in the development of nursery reading; it shows that although innovation was vital in creating the shifts that effected change, paradoxically, a certain resistance to new ideas was also necessary in order to create a stable economic base for the market. Many of the first readers detailed in this survey were reissued, or produced in new

67 McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, p. 13.

editions for many decades, and some are still in print today, showing how some titles have become nursery classics; new styles of first reading did not displace what had gone before, therefore. This concluding chapter thus demonstrates that conservatism was just as important as innovation in establishing the nursery market.

One measure of the importance of the developments charted in this study is the influence that home-learning had on the school curriculum. Fenn produced her reading scheme as an alternative to the unsuitable teaching methods employed by schoolmasters, but by the end of the nineteenth century educationists were eager to adopt Crane's visual approach to reading to improve the style of books used in the school curriculum. The means by which children learned to read was continually being assessed. It will be shown throughout this thesis that the clashes of culture from one generation to the next stimulated critical debate about the effects of children's literature, which gave rise to some of the most radical experiments in literature for the nursery.

CHAPTER TWO

Ellenor Fenn's *Cobwebs to catch flies* and the development of the first commercial home reading scheme

I mean to catch you gently, whisper in your ear,
Be good, and you will be beloved;
Be good, and you will be happy.¹

Ellenor Fenn (1743-1813), educationist and wife of Sir John Fenn (1739-94), first editor of the Paston Letters (1787), was one of a number of influential authors who helped establish the market for children's reading books in the late eighteenth century.² Fenn wrote over fifty books, published anonymously, or pseudonymously under the names of 'Mrs Teachwell', or 'Mrs Lovechild', including primers, natural history books, fables and fairy tales, as well as a range of teaching aids.³ However, the author's most popular and long-lived children's book proved to be her graded reader, *Cobwebs to catch flies: or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years*, published by John Marshall in 1783, which remained in print for more than a hundred and twenty years.⁴ *Cobwebs* was marketed by Marshall as the key component of a home-reading scheme that included educational games, books and instruction manuals for mothers. Fenn's development of this pioneering graded reading programme sets her apart from other significant women writers creating nursery literature at the end of the eighteenth century, such as Mrs Barbauld and Mrs Trimmer.

1 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, xv-xvi. All quotations from *Cobwebs* are taken from the first edition published in 1783, held at the British Library (1210.1.1.(2.), ESTC T073091, digitised for Eighteenth Century Collections Online (ECCO).

2 Known as Lady Fenn following the knighthood of John Fenn for his role as first editor of the Paston Letters (1787). David Stoker, 'Fenn, Ellenor, Lady Fenn (1744-1813)', *ODNB*, OUP online edition. Hereafter, the online edition will be cited in footnotes as *ODNB*. Access details are given on the Abbreviations page and document numbers are listed in 'Works Cited'. David Stoker, 'Fenn, Sir John (1739-1794)'. David Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn as "Mrs Teachwell" and "Mrs Lovechild": A Pioneer Late Eighteenth-Century Children's Writer, Educator, and Philanthropist', *Princeton University Chronicle*, 68 (2007), 817-50. Darton, pp. 163-4.

3 For a checklist of 53 books and 11 teaching schemes, see David Stoker, 'Establishing Lady Fenn's Canon', *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 103 (2009), 43-72 (pp. 64-72). Stoker emphasises the numerous mistakes and false attributions to pseudonyms that litter Fenn's bibliographical record. See also Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn', pp. 821-40. Works by Solomon Lovechild are often misattributed. For example, see Eric Quale, *Early Children's Books: A Collector's Guide* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1982), p. 55.

4 For a preliminary list of 45 editions see David Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: A Bibliographical Case Study: Occasional Paper VII* (n.p.: Children's Books History Society, 2008), pp. 15-19. I have uncovered further editions (see Chapter Six and Appendix Three).

According to Darton, John Marshall was the ‘first important “specialist” rival’ to the Newbery firm.⁵ In 1779 he inherited the publishing business owned by his father Richard Marshall, which specialised in chapbooks and popular prints.⁶ As a young publisher looking to expand the business, he saw opportunities in the emerging children’s market, and Fenn, one of a number of women writers that he represented, seems to have been instrumental in securing his success.⁷ It is evident that the business arrangement between Fenn and Marshall was a dynamic one, which propelled the author into her role as an educationalist and helped establish the publisher’s reputation as the ‘Children’s Printer’.⁸ Their collaboration offers many insights into the way the market for nursery books developed at the end of the eighteenth century.

Although Fenn’s books proved especially popular, her true identity as an author was not revealed until after her death in 1813, when an obituary was published in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* praising her literary output and the extent of her charitable works.⁹ However, although respected for her contribution to the education of children in her day, Fenn’s significance in the history of children’s reading has, until relatively recently, been overlooked. This is largely due to the negative view expressed by the children’s book historian Percy Muir, who included her as one of the ‘monstrous regiment’ of late eighteenth-century women writers for children

5 Darton, pp. 68, 164, notes Marshall’s pre-eminence from 1780 to 1800. See also chapter 6 ‘John Marshall’s Literary Associates’, in Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, pp. 169-206.

6 John Marshall previously worked for his father and formed John Marshall and Co. with his sister Eleanor (b. 1755), and cousin James (dates unknown). Stoker, ‘Ellenor Fenn as “Mrs Teachwell”’, p. 820. Marshall is listed as both a letter-press printer and wholesale vendor of prints and small books in *The Earliest Directory of The Book Trade by John Pendred (1785)*, ed. Graham Pollard (The Bibliographical Society, 1955), pp. 3, 16.

7 Marshall’s 1781 catalogue included a number of cheap children’s titles costing 6d., or less, inherited with his father’s business. Pickering suggests Marshall realised its shortcomings and shifted emphasis ‘away from amusement to instruction’; see *John Locke and Children’s Books*, pp. 177, 180. Fenn provided Marshall with his most successful titles. See Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 5.

8 Marshall advertised himself as ‘The Children’s Printer’; see *The Times*, 16 October 1806, p. 1. He published 70 books for children between 1780 and 1790. Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 127. Fenn refers to Marshall as the ‘Child’s Printer’, for example, *Fables, by Mrs Teachwell*, p. 76, and *Spelling Book*, p. 113. Like Fenn, Marshall connected with readers by referring to them as his ‘young friends’. See Emma Laws, *Miniature Libraries from the Children’s Book Collections* [relating to exhibition 20 May-17 November 2002] (V&A/National Art Library, 2002), p. 2, (n. 2), and Emma Laws, ‘Miniature Libraries from the Children’s Book Collections’ <<http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/m/miniature-libraries/>>

9 *Gentleman’s Magazine*, November 1813, p. 499. Fenn’s charitable work included setting up a Sunday School in Dereham in 1785. Stoker, ‘Fenn, Ellenor’, *ODNB*.

whom he considered ‘offensively addicted to moralising’.¹⁰

Fenn’s use of pseudonyms may also have contributed to her relative obscurity.¹¹ Recent scholarship has begun to examine the true extent of Fenn’s prodigious output for children, and to review her ‘moral’ intentions in a more favourable light.¹² It is my aim in this chapter to extend this appreciation of Fenn’s achievements as an early woman educationist through a detailed analysis of *Cobwebs* and its relationship to the components of the author’s reading programme. I will demonstrate that *Cobwebs* was representative of a new child-centred pedagogy that gained currency in the late eighteenth century, and that Marshall’s marketing of Fenn’s pioneering reading scheme sparked significant developments in the children’s nursery market.

The long publishing history of *Cobwebs* is remarkable, and has been found deserving of a special study outlined in Chapter Six. In this chapter I show that Fenn’s novel approach to teaching reading and Marshall’s bullish determination to gain a foothold in the children’s market were key factors in the book’s initial success. The symbiotic partnership of author and publisher resulted in the launch of a range of educational titles that helped cement the precept of amusement as the vehicle for instruction in the late eighteenth century, and the development of the notion of a discrete ‘nursery’ literature.

Ellenor Fenn as ‘Mrs Teachwell’

The two volumes of stories in *Cobwebs* were designed to provide suitable reading exercises for children as young as three.¹³ Ellenor and John Fenn had no children

10 See Chapter 3, ‘A Monstrous Regiment’, in Percy Muir, *English Children’s Books*, pp. 82-99. Muir’s ‘regiment’ included Barbauld, Trimmer, Hannah More (1745-1833), Mary Anne Kilner (1753-1831), Dorothy Kilner (1755-1836), Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), Mary Martha Sherwood (1775-1851), Ann Taylor (1782-1866), Jane Taylor (1783-1824) and Mary Elliott (?1794-1870). For feminist reappraisal of women writers in response to Muir’s negative criticism, see Mitzi Myers, ‘Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers’, *Children’s Literature*, 14 (1986), 31-59; Norma Clarke, ‘“The Cursed Barbauld Crew”: Women Writers and Writing for Children in the Late Eighteenth Century’, in *Opening the Nursery Door*, ed. Hilton, Styles, and Watson, 91-103.

11 Stoker, ‘Ellenor Fenn’, p. 850.

12 See Cajka (2003); Clarke (2004); Immel (1997, 2004); Jackson (1989); Myers (1986); Percy (2006); Navest (2008, 2009); Shefrin (1999); Stoker (2007, 2008, 2009). Publication details are given at the point of citation.

13 Some schools expected children to have learned to read at home. See J. H. Plumb, ‘The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Past and Present*, 67 (1975), 64-95 (p. 67).

of their own, but had acted as guardians of an orphaned girl, Mary Andrews, and later adopted their nephew William Frere (1775-1836).¹⁴ Fenn took her role as surrogate mother very seriously and she assured her sister-in-law of her dedication as a deputising parent: ‘I feel that my attachment to your young folk is so little short of parental affection, that the transition was slight, from *thinking* like a mother, to *speaking* like one.’¹⁵ Following common practice in educated families, Fenn taught William to read at the age of three.¹⁶ *Cobwebs* was based on a home-made book that Fenn created to please the boy, who ‘loved to learn to read’, as she describes in a preface:

I cut out the prints, wrote some stories to suit them, and pasted the prints into my little book. I covered it nicely; and the next morning, when he had done his lesson well, I took it -----“Here, my dear, said I, is a book for you, in which you can read”.¹⁷

An old gardener recalled seeing Fenn sitting on the lawn at five o’clock on a summer morning, with a portfolio on her knee, ‘carefully printing the words letter by letter, with her pen, for the sake of the children who were not old enough to read written characters’ and then binding the volumes in gaily coloured paper.¹⁸ It is interesting to note that Fenn created her storybooks using commercial prints and copying the style of binding found in published children’s books, just as Jane

¹⁴ William was the fourth son of Fenn’s brother John Frere (1740-1807), and his wife Jane (1746-1813). Alsager Vian, ‘Frere, William (1775-1836)’, rev. Jonathan Harris, *ODNB*.

¹⁵ [Ellenor Fenn], *Fables by Mrs Teachwell; in which the morals are drawn incidentally in various ways* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co., [1783]), p. 83.

¹⁶ Fenn refers to William’s age in *Cobwebs*, I, p. xxiv. Education for the middle and upper classes typically began at the age of three, or four. See Jackson, *Engines of Instruction*, pp. 21-2. Jane Johnson began teaching her children to read as soon as they could talk; her son Charles read competently at four and a half. See Arizpe and Styles, *Reading Lessons*, p. 77. Hester Lynch Thrale, close friend of Dr Johnson, recorded the ages at which her children learned to read (they began at two): Hester read ‘tolerably well’ at four; Harry read scriptures at five; Lucy could read psalms at three. Mary Hyde, *The Thrales of Streatham Park* (Cambridge, MA., and London: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 29, 49, 55. Grenby cites Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) among examples of early readers in M. O. Grenby, *The Child Reader, 1740-1800* (Cambridge and NY: CUP, 2011), p. 39.

¹⁷ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. xxiii-xxiv. Stating the book was produced for the author’s child was a ‘rhetorical act’, designed to place it in the tradition of conduct books written for particular children, such as Fénelon’s *Télémaque*, according to M. O. Grenby, ‘The Origins of Children’s Literature’, in *CCCL*, ed. Grenby and Immel, p. 14.

¹⁸ Charles Welsh, ‘A Forgotten Primer and its Author’, *The Athenaeum*, 20 July 1901, 94-5 (p. 95), reprinted in *The Bibliographer*, I (1902), 190-4 (p. 193). The anecdote is also cited in the chapter ‘A Spinster and a Lady Bountiful of the Eighteenth Century’ in Gabrielle Festing, *Unstoried in History: Portraits of Some Famous Women of the 16th, 17th and 18th Centuries* (James Nisbet & Co., 1901), 249-303 (p. 296). (The chapter title refers to Fenn’s Aunt Ellenor Frere 1713-1801, who supervised her education).

Johnson had done forty years earlier. This shows that educated middle-class mothers continued to make customised reading material even when children's books were readily available.¹⁹

Cobwebs consisted of two linked volumes, the first containing 'Easy Lessons' in words of three, four, five and six letters, 'Suited to children from Three to Five Years of Age', the second containing 'Instructive Lessons' in words of one, two, three and four syllables, 'Suited to Children from Five to Eight Years of Age'. The book was innovative in content and design, using large, well-spaced type, in the style of *Lessons for children*, but improving on Barbauld's infant reader by arranging the conversations between the mother and child in the form of dialogues with named parts ('Mother.', 'Boy. '), to facilitate shared reading between a mother and child, and adding woodcut illustrations to excite children's interest in the stories.²⁰ In her extensive prefatory material Fenn promoted the vital role of mothers in teaching children to read.

Fenn believed that children learn more readily when they have 'no idea of a task or a lesson', in 'a dialogue which is perfectly adapted to [their] comprehension', and she thought that the use of 'short words' and 'large clear type', would make reading 'the most pleasing of [a child's] amusements'.²¹ Like Sarah Trimmer (1741-1810), Fenn was inspired to supply 'prattle' for children by Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825), whose *Lessons for children* (1778-9) was issued by J. Johnson around the time William entered the Fenn household, and approached the publisher John Marshall (1756-1828).²² She had been creating such homemade books since 1775,

19 Grenby, 'The Origins of Children's Literature', p. 12.

20 There were earlier books with large type, wide margins and simple language, for example, ['J. G'], *A playbook for children to allure them to read as soon as they can speak plain* (Printed for John Harris, 1694). See also Plumb, 'New World of Children' (article), p. 81.

21 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. vi, xx, xxiii.

22 Ibid., p. vi. In the 'Dedication' in *Cobwebs*, addressed to 'Mrs E****d F****' the wife of her brother Edward Frere, identified as Mary (Barker) Frere in Karen Cajka, 'The Forgotten Women Grammarians of Eighteenth-Century England' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Connecticut, 2003), 'Ellenor Fenn', pp. 124-90 (p. 150). Fenn acknowledges Barbauld paved the way for other writers: 'Nor need I blush to supply prattle for infants, since a lady of superior genius condescended, long since, to set the example – as a hint, I suppose, how to convey instruction blended with amusement, *Cobwebs*, I, p. vii. For Fenn's approach to Marshall see Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn', p. 820.

and had a body of work to offer for publication.²³

It is significant that Fenn took the initiative in getting her work published, approaching John Marshall through a family friend to enquire ‘whether he would accept a manuscript and print it without expence to the unknown writer’.²⁴ This indicates that the children’s market was being stimulated not just by the actions of publishers anticipating new audiences, but also by amateur writers.²⁵ Fenn may have been attracted to Marshall because of his avowed intention to promote rational, educational works. He famously published a testimonial claiming the works in his children’s list were ‘entirely divested of that prejudicial Nonsense (to young Minds) the Tales of Hobgoblins, Witches, Fairies, Love, Gallantry, &c.’.²⁶ According to Pickering, individual authors published by Marshall ‘were able to exercise more than just an overseer’s control over their manuscripts’, and this would have impressed Fenn, as she had very clear ideas about how her work should be presented.²⁷ Fenn’s appreciation of Marshall’s agreement to grant her ‘large clear type’ is shown in her prefatory address to children in *Cobwebs*.²⁸

Marshall was astute in recognising the sales potential of Fenn’s books, which simultaneously responded to the growing desire of middle-class parents for entertaining and morally improving nursery instruction and an underlying desire to advance their children’s prospects through home education; he rushed out seven of her titles in 1783, and published a further thirteen over the next twelve

23 Fenn wrote a set of fables for her nephew George in 1775. Stoker, ‘Ellenor Fenn’, p. 820. She may have written earlier books for her charge Mary Andrew. Cajka, ‘The Forgotten Women Grammarians’, p. 131.

24 Fenn, *Fables, by Mrs Teachwell*, p. 76. The manuscript referred to is *School occurrences*. The family friend was the astronomer Francis Wollaston (1731–1815), Rector of East Dereham (where Fenn lived), brother of the Rev. George Wollaston, Rector of St Mary, Aldermary (1774–90), from whose churchyard Marshall operated his business. See Stoker, ‘Ellenor Fenn’, p. 820.

25 See also Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 127, who contends that author educators played a greater role than publishers during this period.

26 See the advertisement in backmatter of [“A. C.”], *The footstep to Mrs. Trimmer’s Sacred history* (John Marshall and Co., 1785). See also Darton, p. 161, and Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, p. 176.

27 Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, p. 187.

28 Fenn praises the large type in Marshall’s *Imperial spelling book* in *Cobwebs*, I, p. xxii. Fenn repeats the puff in *Fables in monosyllables by Mrs. Teachwell; to which are added Morals in dialogues* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co, [1783]), p. xviii, and *The art of teaching in sport* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co, 1785), p. 25. (Hereafter, *Art of teaching*)

years.²⁹ As Fenn sought neither fame nor financial remuneration for publishing her ‘little works’, receiving only a few dozen copies in lieu of payment, it can be assumed that her motives were philanthropic.³⁰ Fenn’s ready prepared list of books, for which no author fee was required, must have seemed like a gift to a publisher hoping to expand his influence in the children’s market.

The author’s modesty and propriety in publishing anonymously were consistent with contemporary views of ladylike behaviour; her genteel upbringing had given her a good education and prepared her for a life of leisure.³¹ Her marriage to John Fenn, who had been at Cambridge University with her brother John, enabled her to retain a position of privilege in society, and they found a common interest in charitable works.³² Writing in his memoirs, Sir John Fenn hoped that he would be judged as someone who was ‘not an entirely useless Member of Society’, displaying a sense of social responsibility that his wife would undoubtedly have shared.³³ John Fenn’s editing of the Paston Letters (1422-1509) coincided with the beginning of his wife’s writing career and meant that intellectual and literary pursuits were a part of her domestic life.

However, although Fenn had been circumspect about revealing her identity to the public, she was not shy in stating her intentions for her educational works. The various prefaces to Fenn’s books suggest that she had a genuine interest in children’s education and a consequent wish to instruct young mothers in nursery education. ‘[My] heart glows at the idea of smoothing the thorny path of a thousand

29 For the ‘growing unsureness’ of parents in educating their children, see Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: CUP, 1996; first pub. 1983), p. 120. Fenn provided Marshall with his most successful titles. See Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 5.

30 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. v. According to a memorandum inserted in Sir John Fenn’s autobiography in the Norfolk Records office, Fenn received between 35 and 70 copies in lieu of payment for her early works. See Stoker, ‘Establishing Lady Fenn’s Canon’, pp. 64-5. Fenn may not have had a choice in the matter. Some publishers required authors to transfer their rights forever, according to William St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: CUP, 2004), p. 113. It is possible that Fenn intended to distribute free copies to family and friends and also to use them in the Sunday school she set up (see p. 55, 9 n.).

31 Using a pseudonym was common practice as children’s writing was still seen as an inferior branch of literature; Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 72. Barbauld published anonymously, signing her preface to *Lessons for children* ‘A. B.’. Sarah Trimmer published under her own name.

32 As a child, Fenn was ‘of strong original understanding and great accomplishment’. See Festing, *Unstoried in History*, p. 294.

33 John Fenn manuscript memoirs (1782-1794), cited in Carol Percy, ‘Disciplining Women? Grammar, Gender, and Leisure in the Works of Ellenor Fenn (1743-1813)’, *Historiographia Linguistica*, 33:1/2 (2006), 109-37 (p. 128).

little innocents,' she informs the readers of her mothers' guide to her teaching game.³⁴ 'I print for the sake of those ladies who have less leisure than myself', she explains in *Cobwebs*, exhorting mothers to take responsibility for their children's education and not leave it to '*nurses and common servants*'.³⁵ These prefatory letters reveal a consistent theme concerning a mother's role in educating the future generation, which underpins Fenn's educational philosophy.³⁶

Marshall's creation of a writing persona for Fenn, publishing her books under the name of 'Mrs Teachwell', was designed to underline their educational value, and demonstrates the publisher's confidence that the writer could be developed as a 'branded' author.³⁷ Although *Cobwebs* was published without any attribution of authorship, it was included for promotional purposes in a list of Mrs Teachwell's books 'for the Use of Children' printed in the book.³⁸ The advertisement states the suitability of each title for a particular age group – a relatively new marketing ploy – indicating that Marshall had identified a discrete market for books for younger children. The advertisement also advises: 'The above Books may be had in various Bindings: or uniformly bound in Sets', proving that the publisher intended Fenn's books to be seen as a collectable series. Marshall was thus aware of the need actively to market the books as age-graded readers and develop his new writer as an educational 'brand'.

The title of *Cobwebs* alludes to the citation of a proverb in one of Swift's essays, in which he observes: 'Laws are like cobwebs, which may catch small flies, but let wasps and hornets break through.'³⁹ Fenn may have chosen it to add literary gravitas to the simple collection of children's dialogues; however,

34 *Art of teaching*, p. 23.

35 *Cobwebs*, I, pp. vii, ix. For Fenn's desire for mothers to become involved in their children's education, see Andrea Immel, "'Mistress of Infantine Language': Lady Ellenor Fenn, Her *Set of Toys*, and the "Education of Each Moment"', in *Children's Literature*, 25 (1997), 215-28.

36 Grenby notes the discourse relating to a mother's role in education in 'Origins of Children's Literature', pp. 9-14.

37 See also Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn', p. 832.

38 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, 2pp. following p. 94.

39 'A Critical Essay upon the Faculties of the Mind', in Jonathan Swift, *Miscellanies in prose and verse* (Printed for John Morphew, 1711), pp. 247-59 (p. 257). A similar saying is attributed to the Scythian philosopher Anacharsis. See entry 'ANA CHARSIS' in John Lemprière, *Bibliotheca classica, or, A classical dictionary* (Reading: T. Cadell, 1788; repr. NY and London: Garland, 1984).

it also neatly underlines her intention to catch children in her own ‘moral’ laws. She means to catch children ‘gently’ in her web of words to help them grow into honourable and ‘happy’ adult citizens.⁴⁰ Introducing herself as a ‘friend’, to connect with readers, she shows her appreciation that childhood should be a time of ‘careless hours’; nevertheless, she urges her child readers to learn to ‘be good’, so that they will be ‘happy forever’.⁴¹ This linking of goodness and happiness is made throughout the dialogues, and the desire to inculcate the social ideals of the new middling classes is a central tenet of Fenn’s pedagogy.⁴²

Fenn’s agenda is clearly outlined in her various addresses to parents and children, which establish her credentials as a writer and connect her with child readers. In the preface to her first book, *School occurrences*, written in 1782 and published early the following year, ‘Mrs. Teachwell’ announces that she wants to ‘lead little folk to wisdom’, by writing ‘in the character of a child’.⁴³ Her role as a new writer is also set out in the Preface to *School dialogues* [1783], in which she poses various riddles as to her true identity as the ‘Lady’ author of the work: ‘I am a spider – I have long spun in a corner, and now venture to fix my web in a more conspicuous situation’.⁴⁴ In other words, she had been writing at home for her nieces and nephews, but now wanted her work to reach a wider audience.⁴⁵ It is clear, therefore, that educated women such as Fenn and Barbauld and Trimmer now felt a social imperative to share their expertise with other mothers through published works. This desire to reach a public audience was a key factor in the development of the nursery market in the latter quarter of the eighteenth century.

40 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. xv-xvii.

41 Ibid., p. xvii. The message is repeated in ‘To my little readers’, in *Fables in Monosyllables by Mrs Teachwell*, p. xxiv: ‘This was wrote to teach you to be good. If you be good your friends will love you. If you be good, God will bless you.’

42 For the reflection in children’s literature of the aims of a late eighteenth-century society undergoing a ‘dramatic class restructuring’, see O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 20.

43 [Ellenor Fenn], *School occurrences* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co, [1782]), p. vi.

44 [Ellenor Fenn], *School dialogues for boys*, 2 vols (Printed and sold by John Marshall [1783]), I, p. xxi. Fenn repeats the analogy as ‘I WEAVE nets for insects’ in the preface to *Fables in monosyllables*, p. xi.

45 Many of Fenn’s books had their inception as reading material for her family. See, for example, *Rational sports*, in which she assigns parts in the dialogues for William and six of his nine siblings. [Ellenor Fenn] *Rational sports. In dialogues passing among the children of a family* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co., [1783?]). For family details see Cajka, ‘The Forgotten Women Grammarians’, pp. 131, 175, and David Stoker, ‘Frere, John (1740-1807)’, *ODNB*.

Marshall first published *Cobwebs* as two separate volumes, in duodecimo format, in an inexpensive trade binding of leather-backed marbled boards (16.5 x 10 cm) typical of the era (Fig. 2.1).⁴⁶ Volume I had 94 pages of text, including nineteen pages of prefatory material and twelve dialogues, and the second volume had thirteen stories (88 pp.), thus providing a substantial quantity of reading material. *Cobwebs* was printed on high-grade, hand-made, rag-based paper, with sections hand-stitched, and was illustrated with well-executed woodcuts throughout, showing it to be a superior publication. Editions published from the end of the 1780s also featured attractive copperplate frontispiece engravings for each volume, which added a little cachet to the well-designed and printed volumes, and functioned as an important advertisement for the contents.⁴⁷ The prefatory material included two letters to children, which introduced her as their ‘friend’, showing that Fenn was aware of the need to connect with her new readers (Fig. 2.2)

Darton speculates that Marshall may have published *Cobwebs* as an experiment, because the first edition volumes vary considerably and have printing mistakes.⁴⁸ However, as Marshall hurriedly published eight of Fenn’s books within a year, it is more probable that the mistakes were due to hasty production.⁴⁹ Marshall clearly planned to market *Cobwebs* as part of a reading scheme; he announced production of Fenn’s educational toys in a notice at the end of the second volume dialogue ‘Useful Play’, in which two girls are shown playing with a grammar game:

Schemes to assist parents in teaching their children, by way of sport, are in the possession of *John Marshall* and Co. who intend executing them with all

46 The British Library first edition of *Cobwebs*, cited in this chapter, has been rebound in a collection titled ‘Schoolbooks’, without its original cover. Stoker suggests marbled boards as a typical trade binding, but notes some Marshall editions have been found fully bound in contemporary leather. See Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, pp. 9-10.

47 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 7. The engravings are attributed to N. C. Goodnight, possibly a pseudonym. The ESTC makes no reference to the frontispiece in *Cobwebs*.

48 Darton, p. 164.

49 The printer’s advertisement, which follows the contents page in Volume II of the first edition, explains that his ‘inattention occasioned the derangement of the Dialogues’ and advises parents to direct their children to ‘read the dialogues in the Order in which they are arranged’ (as printed on the contents list). In *Fables*, by Mrs Teachwell, p. 78, Fenn explains how Marshall tested the market for her first book, *School occurrences*; it was ‘distributed extensively, for the purpose of making a speedy trial’.



Fig. 2.1 *Cobwebs* (J. Marshall, [17--?; 1789?]), II, cover. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]

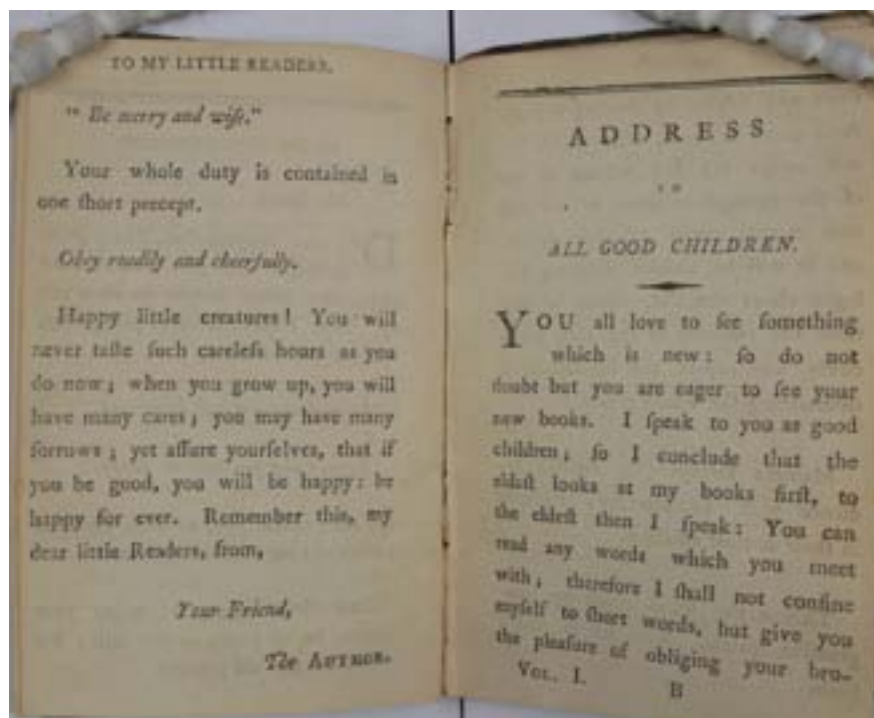


Fig. 2.2 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783; 1799?]), I, Preface. NAL 60.Z.189 (e). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

possible dispatch. – Due notice will be given of their completion.⁵⁰

Marshall sent out review copies of Fenn's books in order to generate interest in the press, and *Cobwebs* appears to have been well received. *The Critical Review* (1783) noted: 'The author of these volumes, who appears to be a lady, has taken uncommon pains to provide easy lessons [...]', and *The Monthly Review* (1784) advised: 'These lessons are very well contrived for teaching children to read'.⁵¹ Marshall clearly understood the need to promote the Mrs Teachwell books and to develop Fenn's credentials as a reputable educationist.

Fenn's Educational Philosophy

Fenn's passionate interest in teaching children is evident when she declares, 'the effusions of my heart [...] will burst forth when I am speaking upon the subject of EDUCATION – a subject, on which I contest myself an enthusiast'.⁵² Fenn's approach to reading was based on practical experience of teaching and stemmed from a genuine desire 'to please a set of children, dear to the writer'.⁵³ However, although Fenn was ostensibly an amateur teacher, the many references to literature and educational philosophy in her books attest to the fact that she was a well-informed woman, whose theory of learning had developed through critical analysis of current reading practice and engagement with the work of influential theorists of the day.⁵⁴

As well as showing her acquaintance with various school primers, Fenn demonstrates that she had read both John Locke (1632-1704) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78). In *Cobwebs* she alludes to Locke's view of the child's mind when she

⁵⁰ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, p. 12.

⁵¹ *The Critical Review, or Annals of Literature*, 57 (May 1784), 399. *The Monthly Review; or, Literary Journal*, 70 (June 1784), 482.

⁵² Fenn, *Fables by Mrs Teachwell*, pp. 85-6.

⁵³ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, xiii. Fenn informs her sister-in-law Jane Frere 'ultimately your family are the object of every publication', *Fables by Mrs Teachwell*, p. 86.

⁵⁴ Fenn says that she laid aside 'Milton, Gray, and Shakespeare to turn abecedarian to the children of other people'. *Art of teaching*, pp. 7-8. John Fenn described his wife as having a literary knowledge that surpassed most women of her day. See Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn', p. 818, n. 4. Fenn felt sufficiently self-assured to correspond with Horace Walpole regarding books she presented to him at Strawberry Hill, informing him that Lady Finch had received her works in the Royal Nursery. Letter dated 3 July 1784 in *Horace Walpole's Miscellaneous Correspondence*, III, ed. W. S. Lewis and John Riely, with others, The Yale edition of Horace Walpole's correspondence, vol. 42 (New Haven: Yale University Press; Oxford: OUP, 1980), pp. 106. For Fenn's literary confidence see Cajka, 'The Forgotten Women Grammarians', pp. 124-5, 179-81.

suggests: 'If the human mind be a *rasa tabula*'.⁵⁵ On the title-page of *Fables in monosyllables* she shows her familiarity with Rousseau's educational treatise *Émile* in the citation: 'Si la nature donne au cerveau d'un enfant cette souplesse qui le rend propre à recevoir toutes sortes d'impressions [...]' (if nature has given this child the plasticity of brain that makes it receptive to every kind of impression...).⁵⁶ As a new writer trying to build a reputation, Fenn undoubtedly felt a need to demonstrate her authority as an educationist by showing her familiarity with current ideas about the potential for shaping the child's mind. Children's writers, of course, regularly cited Locke; Newbery, for example, referred to 'the great Mr. Locke' in the address to parents in *A little pretty pocket-book*, first published in 1744.⁵⁷ Marshall, who was keen to follow in Newbery's footsteps as a children's publisher, would clearly have approved of Fenn's method of endorsing Mrs Teachwell's credentials, and may even have encouraged it in his new author.

In *Émile* (1762), Rousseau assimilated the central premise of Locke's teaching on the nature of the child's mind, but his educational doctrine promoted the child as a free spirit, and he considered reading to be 'le fléau de l'enfance' (the curse of childhood).⁵⁸ It is evident that Fenn was attracted to certain aspects of Rousseau's view of the child, but she did not entirely embrace his overall educational philosophy, cherry-picking those elements that supported her own views. In her preface to *Fables in monosyllables* she grudgingly concedes that his 'remarks' on fables seem 'just', thus enlisting his authority in support of her own book.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, she

⁵⁵ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, ix.

⁵⁶ Locke refers to the child's mind as 'white Paper, or Wax to be moulded and fashioned as one pleases'. John Locke, *Some thoughts concerning education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton, (Oxford and NY: Clarendon Press, 1989, repr. 2003), p. 265, sec. 217. J. J. Rousseau, *Émile, ou de l'éducation. Par J. J. Rousseau, Citoyen de Geneve*, 4 vols (Francfort [1762]), I, p. 134. Fenn's citation of Rousseau omits his instruction that the child's receptive brain should not be imprinted with factual knowledge.

⁵⁷ *A little pretty pocket-book, intended for the instruction and amusement of little Master Tommy, and pretty Miss Polly*, 10th edn (Printed for J. Newbery, 1760), p. 6. For the pervasive influence of Locke see Brian Alderson, 'New Playthings and Gigantick Histories', pp. 185-90, and 'John Marshall's Literary Associates and Disciplining the Natural Temper', in Pickering, *John Locke and Children's Books in Eighteenth-Century England*, pp. 169-206.

⁵⁸ Rousseau, *Émile*, I, p. 142.

⁵⁹ Fenn, *Fables in monosyllables*, p. x. Rousseau argued that the sophisticated language and irony in the fables of Jean de La Fontaine (1621-1695) were beyond children's comprehension. *Émile*, I, pp. 85-90. Fenn states that she does not wish to waste time 'debating whether or no Fable-writing be the most desirable mode of instruction' in *Fables in monosyllables*, p. ix; her simplification of the morals in relation to in a child's life experience addresses Rousseau's criticism of the genre. Locke recommended *Aesop's fables*, because they might 'delight and entertain a child ... yet afford useful reflections to a grown Man'. *Some thoughts*, p. 212, sec. 156.

is careful to distance herself in her critical footnote: 'However mistaken, however detestable, many notions of Rousseau's may be; there are useful maxims to be gleaned from his work respecting children'.⁶⁰ Fenn's strategy for early reading clearly demonstrates a greater affinity with Locke who asserted: 'When he [the child] can talk, 'tis time he should begin to read'.⁶¹

The concept of duty was at the heart of Fenn's educational philosophy, reflecting a number of contemporary influences. She had obviously taken to heart Locke's thoughts about the purpose of parents becoming involved in their children's education, as expressed in *Some thoughts*:

The well Educating of their Children is so much the Duty and Concern of Parents, and the Welfare and Prosperity of the Nation so much depends on it, that I would every one lay it seriously to Heart; [...] if those of that Rank [gentleman] are by their Education once set right, they will quickly bring all the rest into Order.⁶²

Fenn would almost certainly have been familiar with *The whole duty of man* (1658), and other religious treatises on holy living, which emphasised the duty of a child towards his parents.⁶³ This is evident in *School occurrences* when the young ladies being instructed by Mrs Teachwell are shown that it is a parental duty to instil the idea of 'the whole duty of a child', so that their offspring will not become spoiled.⁶⁴ She had also, of course, encountered another eighteenth-century bestseller, *Divine songs, attempted in easy language for the use of children*, written by Isaac Watts (1674-1748), as she includes a verse in the *Cobwebs* dialogue 'The hedgehog', in order to encourage children to share toys and be 'kind and good-humoured'

⁶⁰ Fenn, *Fables in monosyllables*, p. x.

⁶¹ Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 208, sec. 148. For Locke's reading strategies, see pp. 208-12, secs. 148-56.

⁶² Locke's view is expressed in his dedication addressed to 'Edward Clarke of Chipley, Esq.', to whom he was offering advice on the education of his son. *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶³ *The whole duty of man*, written by the Church of England clergyman Richard Allestree (1621/2-1681), was highly influential. It was distributed with the Bible as charity school reading. See Thwaite, *Primer to Pleasure*, p. 53, and Jackson, *Engines of Instruction*, p. 22. The King James Bible text for Ecclesiastes 12: 13 reads: 'Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.' Fenn's emphasis on obedience as a sign of the good child may indicate familiarity with William Law's *Practical treatise upon Christian perfection* (London: Printed for William and John Innys, 1726), which examines the role of social duty and endeavour in achieving perfection. Fenn's promotion of a child's duty was not original; a section entitled 'The duty of man', which set out the duties owed to 'ourselves', 'society' and 'God', appeared in *The child's new play-thing*, 2nd edn (M. Cooper, 1743), p. 81.

⁶⁴ Fenn, *School occurrences*, p. 34. In *Fables by Mrs Teachwell*, p. 75, Fenn restates her intention to supply 'a series of little volumes, tending to enforce the Duties of Childhood and early Youth'.

to each other in a happy family.⁶⁵ In Watts's preface to *Divine songs*, addressed 'To all those who are concerned in the education of children', he outlines the duty of parents in raising the future generation:

It is an awful and important Charge that is committed to you. The Wisdom and Welfare of the succeeding Generation are intrusted with you beforehand, and depend much on your Conduct. The seeds of Misery or Happiness in this World, and that to come are oftentimes sown very early; and therefore whatever may conduce to give the Minds of Children a Relish for Virtue and Religion, ought, in the first place, to be proposed to you.⁶⁶

Watts's songs for children focus on the basic tenets of a good Christian life, for example, 'Against lying' (Song xv), and 'Obedience to parents' (Song xxiii).⁶⁷ These Christian values are embedded within the dialogues in *Cobwebs* and underscore many of Fenn's other works.

Fenn adopts a strong moral tone in expressing her views on a child's obedience to his parents and compliance with expectations for good behaviour. For example in *Fables by Mrs. Teachwell*, she tells young readers that the chief duties of a child lie within a narrow compass:

A ready and cheerful obedience; as inviolate in the absence of your parents as when they are present; a strict adherence to truth; a contented submission to the will of your superiors; and a readiness to comply with the innocent wishes of your equals or, in other words, to do to them as you would wish they should do to you.⁶⁸

In *Morals to a set of fables by Mrs. Teachwell* (1783) she invokes religious

65 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, pp. 60-8 (p. 63). Fenn cites 'Love between Brother and Sister' (Song XVII), Isaac Watts, *Divine songs* (1715; Printed for J. Buckland and others, 1775), pp. 24-5.

66 Watts, *Divine songs*, pp. v-vi. In *School dialogues*, written for William as he was about to leave 'her sheltering wing' to attend school, Fenn warns him about the vices to which he will be exposed. In her 'Dedication', written on his eighth birthday, 28 November 1783, she hopes God will 'preserve [him] blameless amidst a crooked and perverse generation', (p. viii).

67 'Obedience to parents' includes the words, 'Let Children that would fear the Lord, / Hear what their Teachers say; / With Rev'rence meet their Parents' Word, / And with Delight obey'. Watts, *Divine songs*, p. 33.

68 Fenn, *Fables by Mrs Teachwell*, p. vi-vii. Jane Johnson similarly cited this maxim in her lesson cards: "My son, so long as you live never forget the following Rule Always do unto every one as you would they should do unto you." Cited in Arizpe and Styles, *Reading Lessons*, p. 110.

observance: “O-BE-DI-ENCE is the whole of our duty. God him-self says in the Ho-ly Scrip-tures, “Chil-dren o-bey your pa-rents.””⁶⁹ Fenn is less strident in expressing her views in *Cobwebs*; however, she leaves no doubt about acceptable behaviour for all the ‘good children’ she is addressing. They must first and foremost offer unquestioning obedience to their parents: ‘*Your whole duty is contained in one short precept, Obey readily and cheerfully.*’⁷⁰

This ‘precept’ is spelled out in many of the dialogues, for example, ‘The stubborn child’, in which the boy who does not want to go to school is told by Mr Steady ‘Good children ask for no reasons’, because ‘his parents can best judge what is proper’.⁷¹ To reinforce the point, the gentleman tells a story about an ‘ill-disposed’ girl called Miss Wilful, who questioned an instruction not to play with a dog and reaped the ‘consequences’ of her disobedience by having her hand bitten.⁷² The requirement for obedience is repeated in ‘The pictures’, in which the character Lady Lovechild outlines how children might grow up to ‘act worthily’ and be ‘beloved’, if they follow the ‘pattern of goodness’ exemplified by a child pictured in one of the portraits displayed in her gallery; the girl does not ‘disobey her parents’ or ‘contradict her brothers or sisters’ and complies with ‘any request of theirs’.⁷³ In ‘The happy family’, Fenn underlines her message that good parenting pays dividends. Mr and Mrs Freelove ‘took great pains with their children, and taught them as soon as they could learn, all that was proper for their age’; in consequence, the eight Freelove children ‘do as they [are] bid in all things’ and are shown to be ‘the happiest children in the world’.⁷⁴ Fenn’s simple stories thus emphasise the importance of parental guidance, and the requirement for children to do as they are told.

69 [Ellenor Fenn], *Morals to a set of fables by Mrs. Teachwell* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co., [ca. 1790]), p. 38. I cite from an example of this book bound into *Fables in monosyllables* V&A NAL 60.Z.241, with separate pagination. Here Fenn shows her opposition to Rousseau, who believed a child should act only from necessity, and that the words obey and command should never be used: ‘ni rien faire par obéissance, mais seulement par nécessité; ainsi les mots d’obéir & de commander seront proscrits de son Dictionnaire’; *Émile*, p. 92.

70 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. xvi-xvii.

71 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, pp.44-52 (47). For Fenn’s use of Lockean reasoning to convey ideas on discipline in *Cobwebs*, see Pickering, *John Locke*, p. 194.

72 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, p. 51.

73 Ibid., pp. 54-6. Fenn’s second pseudonym ‘Lovechild’ may have been inspired by her story of a bountiful woman, with book-room ‘fitted up with books suited to little people of different ages’, and gallery of pictures ‘designed to teach little folk’ (pp. 53-4).

74 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, pp. 13-14.

The work of Fenn's contemporaries Barbauld, Edgeworth, Trimmer and More was similarly imbued with this sense of moral duty, which encouraged the idea of a social contract between parent and child. However, it was not just the preserve of earnest women writers for children. Thomas Day (1748-1789) also asserted the social obligation of parents and teachers, making moral re-education the theme of his highly successful work for children, *The history of Sandford and Merton* (1783-1789): 'He that undertakes the education of a child [...] undertakes the most important duty of society'.⁷⁵ Richardson notes that although such writers were not united by a single ideology, they did 'share a set of discursive practices, codes, and constraints'.⁷⁶ This shared agenda is also noted by Clarke, in her defence of 'The Cursed Barbauld Crew': 'the avowed object of the moral and didactic writers was to enable children to grow into mature and reasonable adults', she contends.⁷⁷ Mitzi Myers, who led the field in reappraising women writers of the period, recognised in their 'self-conscious' didacticism 'a resilient and purposeful maternal discourse, a female mode of cultural reform directed toward improvement of both self and community'.⁷⁸ Fenn's moral agenda thus reflects the collective aim of a community of children's writers and educators bent on shaping the future nation. Working within the constraints of a patriarchal system that expected women and children to know their place, she was also attempting to enhance the social standing of mothers by demonstrating their vital function as primary educators.

Mothers as educators

Fenn's reading books provided lessons for children, suited to their age and ability. Her plan for an early start to education meant that the development of the infant could be shaped more effectively. The variety and extent of Fenn's output of books over a thirty-year period demonstrates the author's confidence in her capacity to teach not only young children, but to instruct mothers and daughters in their

⁷⁵ Thomas Day, *The history of Sandford and Merton*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (Printed for J. Stockdale, 1784), I, p. 48. Day was influenced by Rousseau. See Peter Rowland, 'Day, Thomas (1748-1789)', ODNB.

⁷⁶ Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 128.

⁷⁷ Norma Clarke, 'The Cursed Barbauld Crew', p. 101. For the stimulation of new thinking about childhood and education through the 'domesticizing' of education, see Julia Briggs, "'Delightful Task!': Women, Children, and Reading in the Mid-Eighteenth Century", in *Culturing the Child 1690-1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers*, ed. Donelle Ruwe (Lanham, MD; Toronto; Oxford: The Children's Literature Association and Scarecrow Press, 2005), 67-82.

⁷⁸ Myers, 'Impeccable Governesses', p. 55. See also Julia Briggs, "'Delightful Task!'" p. 71.

important role as educators in the home nursery.⁷⁹ ‘It is the father’s province to attend to the school education; I design to treat of that which belongs to the mother’, she states in the preface to *Rational sports*.⁸⁰ ‘The mother has a few years in which to lay every structure which is to be raised’, she says, ‘[i]t is the province of the mother to tincture the mind.’⁸¹ Similarly, in *Art of teaching*, she stresses that it is the ‘duty’ of a mother to ‘form the disposition and capacity’ of her children.⁸² In *Fables by Mrs Teachwell* (1783) she elevates the status of the matriarchal figure and attempts to describe the ‘perfect Mother’:

How important the office! How valuable the character!---To such Mothers we look up to form the manners of the rising generation; --- to such women, to save a nation from impending ruin, by training its youth to virtue.⁸³

Fenn’s educational philosophy thus extends beyond ideas about the best way to instruct reading, to encompass ideas concerning the inculcation of moral sensibility in children, and raising the status of women in their role as educators.⁸⁴

Vickery’s study of the letters and diaries of eighteenth-century women indicates that upper-middle-class mothers were usually responsible for the upbringing of children, often with the help of a nursery maid, and took their role as ‘educators and entertainers’ seriously.⁸⁵ However, as Fenn acknowledges in *Cobwebs*, the mother might not have the time, or even the inclination, to make her children’s education a priority: ‘I conceive a lady, whose babes are but the visitors of an hour in the

79 For Fenn’s delineation of the mother’s role see Cajka, ‘Forgotten Women Grammarians’, pp. 140-54.

80 Fenn, *Rational sports*, p. xi.

81 Ibid., p. xii.

82 Fenn, *Art of teaching*, p. 5.

83 Fenn, *Fables by Mrs Teachwell*, p. 84. Myers notes that Georgian children ‘were the locus of a revolutionary generation’s hopes and fears’, and a force for cultural change. See ‘Impeccable Governesses’, p. 36. For contemporary discourse on motherhood and education see Grenby, ‘The Origins of Children’s Literature’, pp. 10-12, and Michèle Cohen, ‘Mothers of Sons, Mothers of Daughters: the Ambiguous Figure of the Mother in Eighteenth-Century Educational Discourse’, in *History, Politics and Policy-Making in Education*, ed. David Crook and Gary McCulloch (Institute of Education, University of London, 2007), 13-29.

84 For Fenn’s promotion of domestic and cultural authority through teaching, see Carol Percy, ‘Disciplining Women?’, pp. 127-30. Sarah Robbins similarly notes the implicit demand for middle-class women to be adequately educated for their ‘vital teaching responsibility’, and its ‘indirect route to cultural power’, see ‘Lessons for Children and Teaching Mothers’, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 17:2 (1993), 135-51 (pp. 136, 141). For the cultural redefinition of motherhood in the period see Myers, ‘Impeccable Governesses’, and Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, pp. 167-212.

85 Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 112-14.

parlour’.⁸⁶ The frontispiece in Volume I, designed as a teaser for the story ‘The doll’, pictures a stylish lady glancing up from her sewing to view the doll that her daughter is showing her (Fig. 2.3).⁸⁷ The woman has a long gown and extravagant high-topped hat, and her daughter and the doll are also fashionably dressed. Light streams in to the drawing room from a recessed window, drawing attention to the figures. A portrait of a distinguished gentleman, hanging on the wall, completes the picture of domestic harmony with its suggestion that he is watching over the mother and daughter and has provided for their material wellbeing.

Seven of the twelve illustrations in the first volume show similar scenes of a mother in conversation with the child or in close contact. In three of the pictures the elegant mother is shown seated in a high-backed armchair sewing, underlining Fenn’s claim that mothers have ‘less leisure’ for preparing their children’s lessons, but also suggesting her capacity to interact with her child while working (Figs. 2.4-2.5).⁸⁸ Fenn’s aim to attract fashionable mothers who may not be aware of their primary duty to their children to embark on her education programme, is evident in her comment in *Rational sports*, in which she flatters women who have bought her book: ‘I write for *real mothers*, not ladies who leave their offspring to imbibe the follies of the kitchen, whilst they roam to places of diversion.’⁸⁹ The frontispiece engraving in the second volume of *Cobwebs* picks up this message; it features a graceful lady showing her son the surrounding countryside, thus announcing *Cobwebs* as a book for wealthy patrons, while simultaneously emphasising the role of the mother as invigilator of her children’s play, and provider of instruction (Fig. 2.6).

In *Cobwebs*, Fenn repeats her warning to mothers to be ‘cautious’ about what is written on the clean white paper of the child’s mind. ‘Who would leave their

⁸⁶ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. viii.

⁸⁷ The frontispiece engraving appeared in editions from the late 1780s. Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 7.

⁸⁸ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. vii. For illustrations of mothers sewing see Volume I: ‘The cat’, p. 27, ‘The dog’, p. 43, ‘The doll’, p. 58; Volume II: ‘The kind brother’, p. 69. Vickery cites Bessy Ramsden’s diary to demonstrate the pressure of domestic duties, showing that even middle-class women with maids were obliged to sew. See *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, p. 110. Patricia Crown points up that the inclusion of toys in pictures promoted ‘not only happy motherhood but also buyable gentility’. See ‘The Child in the Visual Culture of Consumption’, in *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Anja Müller (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 63-79 (p. 67).

⁸⁹ Fenn, *Rational sports*, pp. xvi-xvii.



Fig. 2.3 *Cobwebs* (J. Marshall, [17--?; 1789?]), I, frontispiece and title page. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]



Fig. 2.4 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), I, 'The cat'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)



Fig. 2.5 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), II, 'The kind brother'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)



Fig. 2.6 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [17--?; 1794?]), II, frontispiece and title page. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]

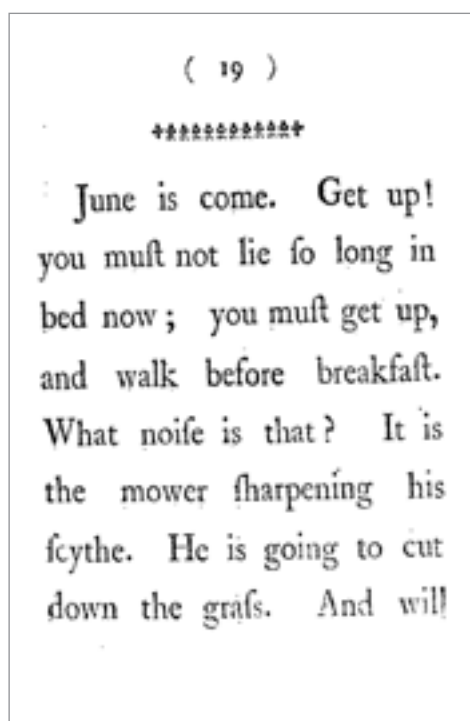


Fig. 2.7 Mrs. Barbauld, *Lessons for children of three years old. Part I* (R. Jackson, [1779]), p.19. © British Library Board 12809.a.7.



Fig. 2.8 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), I, 'The morning'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)

common-place book among fools, to be scrawled upon?’ she asks her sister-in-law, echoing Locke’s warnings about the ‘taint of Servants’.⁹⁰ Implicit in this remark is the idea that the child’s education should be perfectly scripted as it would not be possible to erase any bad impressions in the formation of character: the faults will be there for all to see.⁹¹ This may also help to explain why Fenn chose to produce her stories in the form of dialogues, mirroring the church catechisms, in which the questions of a child can be given the correct responses from the mother.⁹² ‘Dialogue keeps awake that attention which flags even in a speech protracted beyond a few lines’. she maintains in the preface to *School dialogues*.⁹³ Barbauld’s *Lessons for children* had used the dialogic form, with an imagined conversation between mother and child (Fig. 2.7).⁹⁴ However, Fenn refines the model; she takes into account the difficulty a child might have in identifying the speaker of continuous prose and sets out her own conversations as play scripts with named characters, to make them much clearer for the reader to follow (Fig. 2.8). The inclusion of woodcuts to illustrate scenes from the dialogues is designed to help children to visualise the story and attract them to look at the book.

Fenn wanted ‘none but fond mothers’ to see her books, but acknowledges ‘that even parental tenderness may neglect to advert to the necessity of such exceeding simplicity, as is required in conveying ideas to the infant mind’.⁹⁵ In writing simply, in a way that a child speaks, the author professes to be ‘mistress of the

90 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. ix. Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 132, sec. 70. Fenn reiterates her concern that children can be influenced by ‘the most illiterate persons’, and states that the ‘chief duty of a mother [is to] form the constitution, disposition and habits of a child’, in the preface to *The rational dame*, pp. i, iii-iv.

91 Christoph Housewitschka suggests eighteenth-century writers were motivated ‘by a deep belief in human perfectibility; the spirit of the whole age sought to improve the human mind and to use literature and literacy to facilitate social inclusion’. See ‘Locke’s Education or Rousseau’s Freedom: Alternative Socializations in Modern Societies’, in *Fashioning Childhood in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Müller, 81-8 (p. 82).

92 The dialogic method was used widely in children’s literature of the period. See Alan Richardson, ‘The Politics of Childhood: Wordsworth, Blake, and Catechistic Method’, *ELH*, 56:4 (1989), 853-68 (pp. 856, 859). See also ‘Wordsworth, Blake, and Catechistic Method’ in Richardson, *Literature, Education and Romanticism*, pp. 64-77, and p. 132 where he notes that the catechistic effect is produced by ‘repeated oral performance on the part of the child reader and supervising parent’. Shefrin notes the promotion of virtue and rational thought in the progressive educational practices of Jeanne-Marie Le Prince de Beaumont, who was an advocate of ‘rational domesticity’; see ‘“Governesses to their Children”’, p. 194. Clarke suggests this dramatization of the teaching situation highlighted the authoritative voice of the female writer as educator in the work of writers such as Fenn; see ‘The Cursed Barbauld Crew’, p. 96.

93 Fenn, *School dialogues*, p. xxiv.

94 For Barbauld’s influence on the dialogic form see Paul M. Zall, ‘The Cool World of Samuel Taylor Coleridge: Mrs Barbauld’s Crew and the Building of a Mass Reading Class’, *Wordsworth Circle*, 2:3 (1971), 74-9 (p. 77).

95 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. viii.

infantile language', later suggesting that mothers will be 'obliged' to her for having 'condescended to have marched in shackles', in order to write in simple language that a child will understand.⁹⁶

She will, if she be desirous of bringing her little darling forward [...] be aware of the consequence of the first lessons, where nothing meets the eye of the learner, but objects with which he is already familiar; nothing arises to his mind, but subjects with which he begins to be acquainted; sentiments level to his capacity, explained in words which are suited to his progress.⁹⁷

Fenn thus demonstrates her faith in Locke's maxims about tailoring education to a young child's capacity, and underlines the value of *Cobwebs* for the busy young mother, who may appreciate the value of education for her young children, but lacks the right resources to teach them herself.

Fenn clearly understood her role in marketing her works. The prefatory material in *Cobwebs*, for example, is designed to promote its worth as a new type of educational book, and around a fifth of the pages in the first volume are devoted to the author's four introductory letters.⁹⁸ In both the 'Dedication' and the 'Advertisement' Fenn stresses the importance of a mother's role in her child's education and the value of the books if she is 'desirous of bringing her little darling forward'.⁹⁹ The two letters to children ('To my little readers' and 'Address to all good children') serve as an additional advertisement to mothers, with their admonitions for children to be good, and obedient to their parents.¹⁰⁰ In a scene that could have been dreamed up for a TV commercial, Fenn imagines a family sitting in a 'happy circle', with the older child reading the 'Address' aloud to his siblings and a younger child entertaining 'the whole family' with his own efforts at reading the first volume of *Cobwebs*: 'Mama surveys the smiling audience with complacence; rejoicing in their mutual

⁹⁶ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. vii, xi.

⁹⁷ Ibid., xii-xiii.

⁹⁸ For analysis of the authorial preface, see Chapter 9, 'The Function of the Original Preface', in Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: CUP, 1997; repr. 2001), 196-236. Genette notes that one of its primary functions is to ensure that the text is read properly (p. 197).

⁹⁹ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. xii. Fenn also courts her new audience in *Fables by Mrs Teachwell*, pp. 75-81; she hopes that Mrs Teachwell's publications will be accepted with 'cheerfulness' by the 'mother who engages in the "most delightful task;" (sic) instructing her babe' (p. 80).

¹⁰⁰ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. xvii, xxv.

affection'.¹⁰¹ Fenn thus suggests that her linked volumes will provide entertainment, from which both educational advancement and family harmony will ensue.

The development of Fenn's reading scheme

Fenn's sensitivity to the requirements of a dual audience is evident in the development of her reading scheme. Her instruction books are infused with Locke's guiding principles in understanding the limitations of the child's mental capacity, and the mother's role in promoting fun in learning. The author is in accord with his view that:

Children may be cozen'd into a Knowledge of Letters; be *taught to read*, without perceiving it to be any thing but a Sport, and play themselves into that which others are whipp'd for.¹⁰²

She suggests in her 'Dedication' in *Cobwebs* that a child will 'smile with pleasure over his book, and have no idea of a task or a lesson'.¹⁰³ Fenn also concurs with Locke's belief that reward rather than punishment should be the key incentive for learning; 'Who does not grieve to see a child brought forward at the expense of tears?' she says in *Art of teaching*.¹⁰⁴ Fenn's pedagogy thus promotes a child-centred approach that takes account of a limited capacity for learning, advocates reward rather than punishment and recognises play as a valid educational strategy.

Fenn thought it was important to help children develop the confidence to read for themselves as early as possible. She intended *Cobwebs* to provide reading practice for children who were familiar with the letters of the alphabet, and had been introduced to some simple syllable combinations. Locke had suggested that as soon as a child had begun to try to read by such 'gentle ways', he should be introduced to 'some easy, pleasant book, suited to his Capacity', in order to 'draw him on and reward his Pains'.¹⁰⁵ Fenn's use of 'infantine language' in *Cobwebs* was designed to enable a child of only three to experience the achievement of reading a real book.

101 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. xx.

102 Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 209, Sec. 149.

103 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. vi.

104 Fenn, *Art of teaching*, p. 11.

105 Locke, *Some thoughts*, pp. 211-12, sec. 156.

To prepare children for reading *Cobwebs* Fenn devised the *Set of toys* – a wooden chest with a sliding top containing a ‘Spelling box’, ‘Grammar box’ and ‘Figure box’, each divided into ten or twelve compartments – that was ready for sale in 1785, providing apparatus to support early learning (Fig. 2.9). Marshall had announced preparation of the game in the first edition of *Cobwebs*, and Fenn’s story ‘The useful play’ showed two girls using it to teach siblings, which clearly shows that the game and book were planned as a set (Figs. 2.10-2.11).¹⁰⁶ The incorporation of a description of Fenn’s *Set of toys* in the dialogue was an effective means of stimulating interest in the innovative teaching aid ahead of publication. The method of learning grammar is outlined by one of the girls as she explains to the other how to play: ‘we have sports of all kinds to make us quick’, she says, boasting: ‘I could read my mamma’s hand when I was four years old’.¹⁰⁷ The grammar game is also suggested for family entertainment when the second girl says she could use it to teach her younger brother: ‘I shall like the play; and it will teach *Charles* to spell well’.¹⁰⁸ There is an innocent charm in Fenn’s dialogue, suggesting that her objective is to demonstrate to mothers the value of practical education for the child, rather than to promote her own product. Nevertheless, Marshall would have been delighted with the author’s ‘teaser’ for the new educational toy, which highlighted its potential for educational advancement.¹⁰⁹

The ‘Spelling Box’ held the various components of a pre-reading game (including various illustrated alphabet cards, dice showing vowels, spelling tables, and a perforated screen to place over a child’s reading book, ‘designed to confine the child’s eye to any letter, syllable or word’); the ‘Grammar box’ was a compendium of preparatory grammar lesson-cards tied in packets, which were intended for

¹⁰⁶ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, pp. 5-12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 7-9.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

¹⁰⁹ Marshall probably requested Fenn to write the story as a promotional device. Other Marshall titles contained similar puffs within the narrative text, suggesting that he was imitating Newbery’s method of advertisement. See Pickering, *John Locke and Children’s Books*, pp. 228-30.



Fig. 2.9 Ellenor Fenn, *Set of toys* (John Marshall, [ca. 1790]). 'The spelling box'. Cotsen Children's Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library. (CTSN) 22612. Picture Princeton University Library.



Fig. 2.10 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), II, 'The useful play'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)

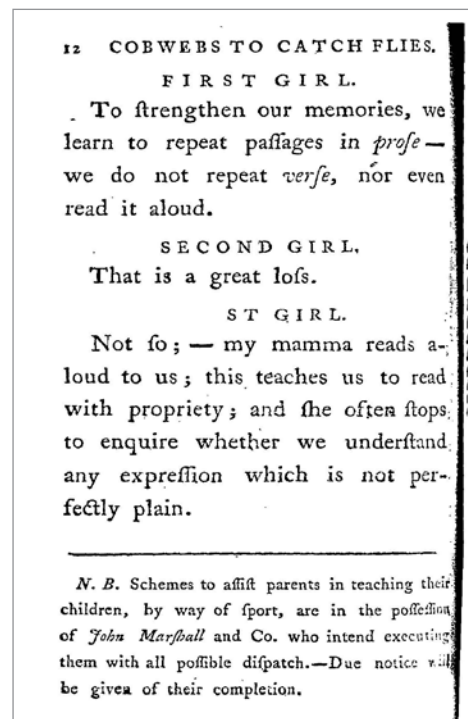


Fig. 2.11 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), II, 'The useful play'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)

children ‘to study as they walk’.¹¹⁰ Active learning was an important part of Fenn’s educational strategy, as explained in the accompanying guide to the game, *Art of teaching*: ‘To fetch the letters from another table, will enliven the sport, and effectually prevent that languor, which is so apt to creep upon a child who remains long in one place.’¹¹¹

The expensive set, sold for £1.1s., with the explanatory guide, *Art of teaching*, available separately, bound in tan leather at nine pence. Instructions in the teaching guide confirm that the two volumes of *Cobwebs* were initially included with the boxes:

The boxes are designed, to supply lessons, suited to the gradual progress of little folk, and a book is provided, to furnish them with a farther variety, as soon as they are advanced to the dignity of reading in a book [...] they are flimsy as their title; *but they are merely designed *to catch flies*.¹¹²

The *Set of toys* was a novel concept in children’s publishing. Sets of word cards were not a new phenomenon in themselves, but the sophistication of Fenn’s teaching scheme, with its ‘Spelling box’, ‘Grammar box’ and ‘Figure box’, meant that it needed very explicit marketing.¹¹³ Marshall issued a booklet with the set, listing the elaborate contents of the boxes; an accompanying note shows he anticipated

110 Fenn, *Art of teaching*, pp. 25, 47. An example of *Set of toys* is held in the Cotsen Children’s Collection, Princeton University Library, catalogued as ‘The spelling box’, CTSN 22612. For descriptions see: advertisement in *Cobwebs* [17--?; 1794?], II, pp. 87-8, Institute of Education Special Collections (IOE), Baines 144; Stoker, ‘Ellenor Fenn’, pp. 827-31; Immel, “‘Mistress of Infantine Language’”, pp. 221-5; Jill Shefrin, “‘Make it a Pleasure and Not a Task’”: Educational Games for Children in Georgian England’, *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 60:2 (1999), 251-75 (pp. 263-4); Percy, ‘Disciplining Women?’, p. 113. For evidence that the novelist Fanny Burney (1752-1840) taught her son the alphabet using the Spelling Box, see Navest, ‘Reading Lessons for “Baby Grammarians”’, pp. 74-5. For the suggestion that *Set of toys* was used in the royal nursery, see Shefrin “‘Governesses to their Children’”, p. 197, and Jill Shefrin, *Such Constant Affectionate Care: Lady Charlotte Finch Royal Governess and the Children of George III* (Los Angeles, CA: Cotsen Occasional Press, 2003), p. 57. For comment on the resemblance of the *Set of toys* to the ‘typographical bureau’ described by Pluche (1763), see Percy, ‘Disciplining Women?’, p. 112, (n. 2).

111 Fenn, *Art of teaching*, p. 10. Fenn acknowledges a child’s short attention span: ‘I could name various expedients to confining the eye of childhood, but moveable letters, or words, appear to me, to be the best calculated to do it’ (p. 12). Locke suggested using games in reading. *Some thoughts*, pp. 210-11, sec. 152-4.

112 Fenn, *Art of teaching*, pp. 13-14. A note stated that two volumes of *Cobwebs* were included in the set. There appear to have been several different editions of the teaching scheme and *Art of teaching* was included in later sets. See the advertisement in a 1790s edition of *Cobwebs*, II, IOE, Baines 144.

113 For comparable eighteenth-century educational toys and games see: Alderson, ‘New Playthings’, pp. 186-93; Jill Shefrin, “‘Make it a Pleasure and Not a Task’”, 263-5; J. H. Plumb, ‘The New World of Children in Eighteenth-Century England’, in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 286-315 (pp. 308-11), also Plumb, ‘The New World of Children’ (*Past and Present* article), pp. 87-90.

the ephemeral nature of the set, advising that the various components could be purchased separately ‘at the prices subjoined’, should they become ‘soiled or lost’ (Figs. 2.12-2.14).¹¹⁴ He also printed an explanatory advertisement in an edition of *Cobwebs* and issued numerous classified notices in local papers.¹¹⁵

Fenn’s spelling book is likely to have been commissioned by Marshall to provide the missing link in the reading programme. Fenn had criticised the ‘bad type’ in Dilworth’s spelling book, so had already anticipated the need for a primer to accompany her scheme.¹¹⁶ She realised that to help mothers to teach they needed a structured lesson plan, indicating how the various elements of the reading scheme could be fully utilised, and she duly produced *A spelling book* in 1787, which outlined her reading curriculum.¹¹⁷ Fenn deplored the dry approach of traditional spelling books, believing that the emphasis they placed on learning the alphabet and endless lists of syllables by rote before even looking at a book was the wrong approach for teaching young children.¹¹⁸ In her preface to *Spelling book* Fenn explains, ‘the act of reading syllables is dull; it is a heavy task, and often disgusts [children], so as to raise an aversion for books; which is difficult to surmount.’¹¹⁹ Here she shows her agreement with Locke, who noted:

None of the Things they [children] are to learn should ever be made a burthen (*sic*) to them, or imposed on them as a *Task*. Whatever is so proposed presently becomes irksome: The Mind takes an Aversion to it.¹²⁰

By writing the *Cobwebs* dialogues in monosyllables, progressing to four syllables, Fenn enabled the same lessons to be learned by the child while they were reading,

114 An example of the four-page advertisement from a set published ca. 1790 is held in the Cotsen Children’s Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Library see Figs. 2.12-2.14.

115 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co., [17--?; 1794?]), II, pp. 87-8. IOE, Baines 144. For an example of the classified advertisements see *World* (1787), 296, 25 December 1787.

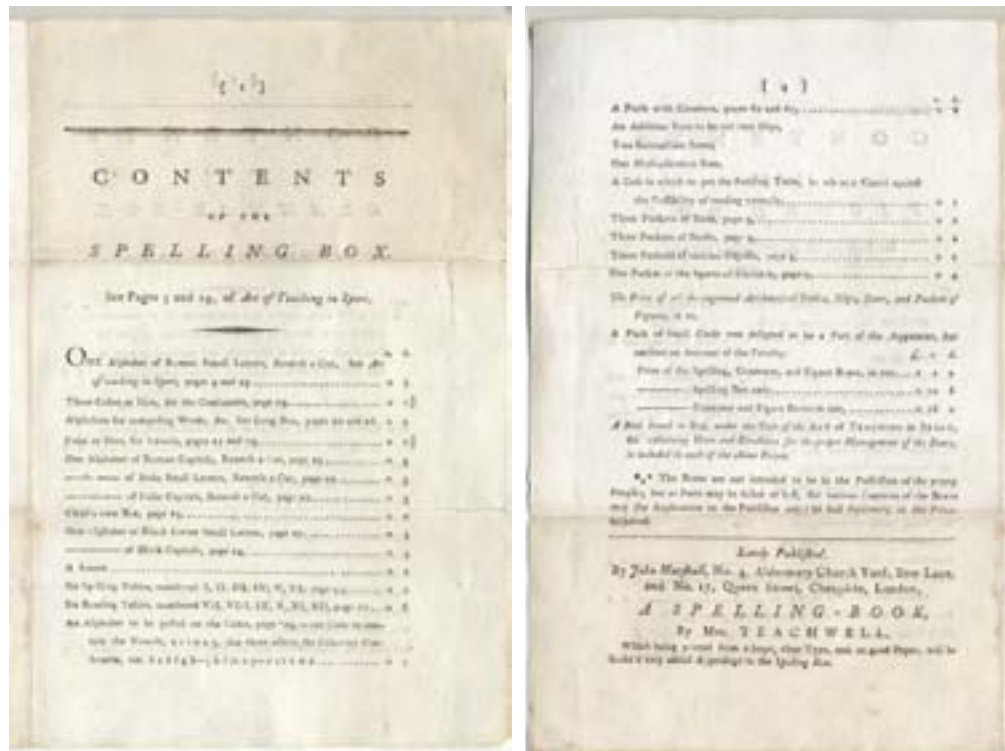
116 Fenn, *Art of teaching*, p. 27. Fenn suggests Dilworth (1751) for older children (p. 11).

117 [Ellenor Fenn], *A spelling book* (Printed and sold by J. Marshall and Co., [1787]).

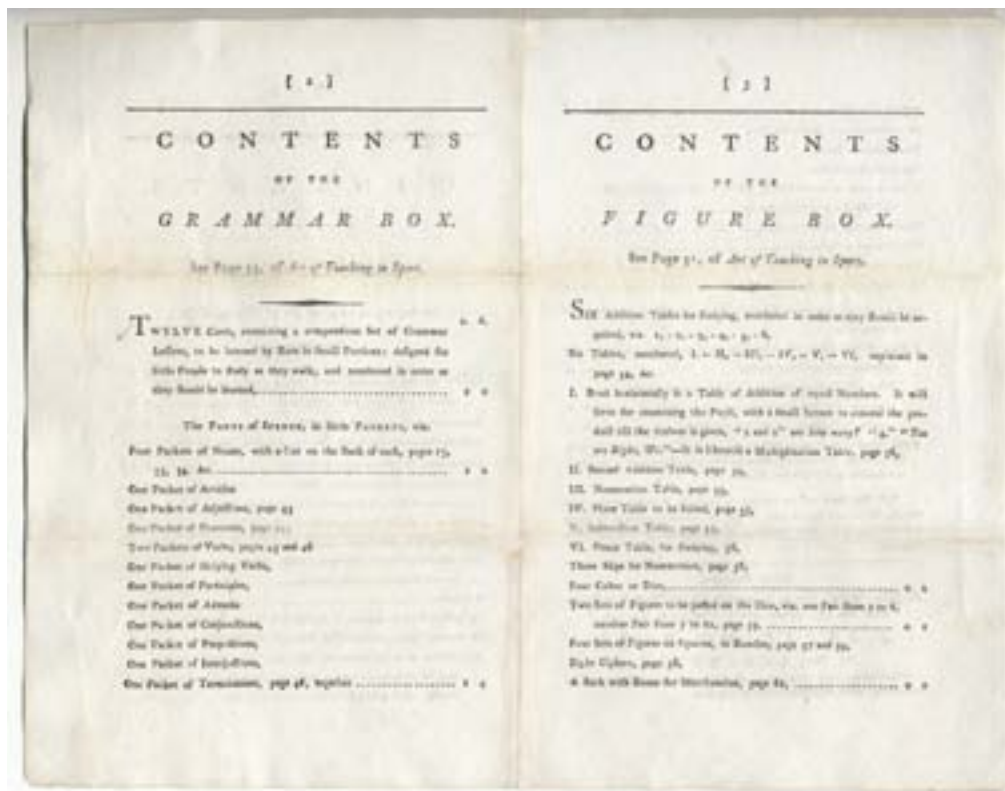
118 Fenn was not alone in finding fault with reading methods in traditional spelling books; Thomas Dyche and Thomas Dilworth were criticized in Solomon Lowe, *The critical spelling-book. An introduction to reading and writing readily and correctly* (Printed for D. Henry and R. Cave, 1755), p. 6. John Brinsley, in his *Ludos literarius* (1612), similarly encouraged understanding rather than rote learning; see Arizpe and Styles, *Reading Lessons*, p. 72.

119 Fenn, *Spelling book*, p. vii.

120 Locke, *Some thoughts*, p. 134, sec. 73.1.



Figs. 2.12-2.14 Contents list for Ellenor Fenn, *Set of toys* (John Marshall, [ca 1790]). 'The spelling box'. Cotsen Children's Library. Department of Rare Books and Special Collections. Princeton University Library. (CTSN) 22612. Pictures Princeton University Library.



and she encouraged mothers to inspire a love of reading through more playful methods suited to a young child's limited concentration span.¹²¹

The formal tuition outlined in her *Spelling book* was designed for use in conjunction with the 'play' elements of the spelling and grammar boxes, with the reading practice provided in *Cobwebs* and *Fables in monosyllables* specifically linked to the lessons, as Fenn points out to mothers:

[...] young ladies, to whom tuition is new, may be pleased to have a set of books, *written purposely for young Children*, announced to them in the order in which they are designed to be read.¹²²

Spelling book shows mothers how to guide children through the early stages of letter recognition ('*a, b, c*'), to the syllabary ('*ba, ca, & c.*'), three-letter combinations ('*bla, cla*'), words in monosyllables ('*bad, had, & c.*') and thence to the basics of sentence structure ('*nouns, adjectives, verbs, & c.*'), outlined in a lesson specially designed for 'young grammarians'.¹²³ *Spelling book* also includes vocabulary lists linked to *Cobwebs*, to enable the mother to familiarise the child with words that he will encounter in the book

In her preface to *Spelling book* Fenn outlines how the mother should conduct the daily lessons: 'the book should never be at the disposal of the child, but produced occasionally' (v); learning letters should be 'as lively as possible' (vi); reading of the first three lessons 'must be made a *pleasure*' (viii); and 'the lesson acquired yesterday should first be recurred to, in order to see that there is a perfect recollection of it' (viii). The mother must also use her discretion in observing her child's progress; if he is struggling he must be 'kept where he is' (vi), and if he is having difficulty with articulating two consonants 'it will be better to pass to page 18 [...] than to allow *imperfect articulation*' (vii). Thus, in her role as the child's home educator, the mother must prepare lessons, make observations and test her child's progress. Fenn's detailed prescriptions were designed to help mothers with

121 Michael suggests Fenn's presentation of letters in a variety of styles and sizes of types helped children identify letters out of their alphabetical sequence. See *The Teaching of English*, p. 66.

122 Fenn, *Spelling book*, p. 12. Fenn similarly advertises *Set of toys* and *Art of teaching* on p. 113.

123 Fenn, *Spelling book*, pp. v-x.

little or no experience of teaching how to maintain the child's interest and ensure proper comprehension of the lessons.

When the child has read the requisite lessons 'with propriety', the mother may 'for change', introduce him to the first volume of *Cobwebs*:

The sentences are longer than those already used, therefore the words ought to be *short*, and of *equal* length; they will serve as a trial, whether our pupil has a just idea of reading? namely, that he should *speak* the sentences precisely as he would were the words his *own*.¹²⁴

The mother must remain attentive to her child's progress: 'the same kind of management must be continued; the same address exerted to keep alive curiosity, and to make the lesson conducive to pleasure'.¹²⁵ The variety of the reading in *Cobwebs* should be 'interspersed' with the remaining lessons in *Spelling book*, and for further amusement the child might be introduced to another of the author's easy readers, *Fables in monosyllables*. Fenn thus indicates that the mother's role is central to the child's progress in learning to read, as she must direct the programme of study at all times.¹²⁶

Fenn's suggestion that the child should speak the sentences as if they were 'his *own*' words indicates her intention for the dialogues to provide unchallenging first reading. She makes it clear in her 'Address' to children in *Cobwebs* that reading aloud was a key part of social interaction and amusement. The description of the 'rogue of three', who 'loved to learn to read', and who 'ran to tell the maids' and 'jumped' and 'shouted' and 'danced' when given the home-made book on which *Cobwebs* was based, may seem exaggerated in its claim, but Fenn explains that he 'longs to take his turn' and is 'impatient to read the new book'.¹²⁷ What Fenn seems to be referring to is the practice of young children being allowed to make a performance of reading, taking their turn at reading

¹²⁴ Fenn, *Spelling book*, p. xi.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

¹²⁶ Grenby gives details of annotations in an 1800 edition of *Cobwebs* indicating its use as a daily reader under adult supervision. Grenby, 'Delightful Instruction?', pp. 193-4.

¹²⁷ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. xxi, xxiv.

aloud to enjoy ‘the satisfaction of entertaining the whole family’.¹²⁸ This explains why Fenn did not think it necessary to simplify the punctuation in *Cobwebs*; she inserts commas, semi-colons and question marks, even in very short sentences, and in a *Spelling book* lesson shows mothers how to explain the function of questions and admirations.¹²⁹ The use of exclamation marks to indicate the excitement of the child shouting ‘I see a hog! Pig! pig! Why do you run?’, as well as the question mark and inconsistent use of upper- and lower-case letters, would not be used in elementary reading today.¹³⁰ However, when reading aloud the child would require the punctuation to indicate where to add emphasis or expression. The importance of expressive reading is flagged in the *Cobwebs* dialogue ‘Useful play’: ‘mamma reads aloud to us; this teaches us to read with propriety’, one of the girls explains.¹³¹

At the point when a child is making the transition to more challenging reading – somewhere between the age of six and eight – Fenn suggests that the child is ready to be introduced to more formal grammar. She took issue with the approach of schoolmasters such as Lowth and Ash, believing that their whole approach was dry and off putting, and adapted their lessons to suit the capacity of her young audience.¹³² She simplifies the task in *Spelling book*, breaking sentences down into their parts of speech in columns, for example in Lesson XVIII:

<i>Noun</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Preposition</i>	<i>Article</i>	<i>Noun</i>
Birds	fly	through	the	air ¹³³

128 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. xx. Grenby offers evidence of the practice of reading aloud in ‘Delightful Instruction?’, p. 188, and Whalley notes it as a common family pastime in *Cobwebs to catch flies*, p. 41.

129 Fenn, *Spelling book*, pp. 135-9.

130 ‘The window’, Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. 37.

131 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, p. 12.

132 Ash and Lowth wrote grammars that included reading lessons for their own children aged five and four, which Fenn considered unsuitable. See Karlijn Navest, ‘Reading Lessons for “Baby Grammarians”: Lady Ellenor Fenn and the Teaching of English Grammar’, in *Acts of Reading*, ed. Styles and Arizpe, 73-86, (p. 76). Fenn takes issue with Lowth, whose *Short introduction to English grammar* was published in 1762: ‘Dr. Lowth speaks of his introduction to English Grammar as being calculated for the Use of the Learner, even of the lowest Class: but a Perusal of it will convince any Person conversant with such Learners, that the Doctor was much mistaken in his Calculation.’ [Ellenor Fenn], *The child’s grammar* (Dublin: Printed for B. Dugdale, [1799]). *Child’s grammar* was first published by Marshall c. 1791. See Stoker, ‘Establishing Lady Fenn’s Canon’, p. 67, no. 19. For Fenn’s adaptation of Ash and Lowth, see Karlijn Navest, ‘Ash’s *Grammatical Institutes* and “Mrs Teachwell’s Library for her young ladies”’, in *Perspectives on Prescriptivism*, ed. Joan C. Beale, Carmela Nocera and Massimo Sturiale (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008), 59-82 (pp. 59-60). For Fenn’s criticism of Lowth and her references to a range of grammatical works, see Cajka, ‘Forgotten Women Grammarians’, pp. 178-9.

133 Fenn, *Spelling book*, pp. 120, 124. For Fenn’s simplified method of teaching grammar see Narvest, ‘Reading Lessons for “Baby Grammarians”’. The Rev. Henry St. John Bullen, author of a 1797 grammar book, praised Fenn’s adaptation of the rules of grammar. See Karlijn Narvest, ‘“Borrowing a few passages” Lady Ellenor Fenn and her Use of Sources’, in *Grammars, Grammarians and Grammar-Writing in Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade Fenn (Berlin and NY: Mouton de Gruyter, 2008), 223-46, (p. 223).

In *Art of teaching* Fenn offered mothers a scripted lesson to encourage children to learn the parts of speech before commencing play with the *Set of toys*:

Now little people attend!--Those who would play with the Grammar Box must get by heart these few lines:

“In *English* there are ten kinds of words, Article, Noun, Adjective, Pronoun, Verb, Participle, Adverb, Conjunction, Preposition, and Interjection.”¹³⁴

The games simultaneously acted as hands-on practice in spelling and grammar for children and instruction for mothers who may not have previously received instruction themselves. The visual aspect of the lessons was central to Fenn’s teaching strategy as her citation in *Art of teaching* shows: “‘CUTS are the best method, that was ever invented, to fix the volatility of childhood’”.¹³⁵ In *Spelling book* she similarly suggests that mothers should provide the child with a ‘multitude of cuts of objects’ to enhance the lessons, and recommends the sets of cuts sold by Marshall ‘provided for that purpose’, as well as the *Set of toys*.¹³⁶

In order to prepare the child to progress to reading the second volume of *Cobwebs*, Fenn thinks it ‘expedient’ that he should familiarise himself with words of two syllables, and in *Spelling book* she provides a list of words that will be encountered. These are well laid out in three columns with vertical lines to space the words in order to facilitate easy reading. To help young readers with pronunciation, Fenn separates the syllables in the split-word method: ‘A-bout’, ‘a-broad’, ‘col-lect’, ‘crea-ture’, for example.¹³⁷ In *Morals to a set of Fables*, Fenn offers children more

¹³⁴ Fenn, *Art of teaching*, p. 38.

¹³⁵ Fenn, *Art of teaching*, p. 9. Fenn states her source as ‘an author who is serious’, having in the same passage mounted a defence of Cornelius Scriblerus, the father of Martinus Scriblerus, the character invented by Arbuthnot, Pope, Swift, and Gay to satirise playful learning in *Memoirs of the extraordinary life, works and discoveries of Martinus Scriblerus. By Mr Pope* (1740). For comment on Fenn’s surprising stance in aligning herself with Scriblerus, see Immel, “‘Mistress of Infantine Language’”, p. 221.

¹³⁶ Fenn, *Spelling book*, p. 113. Locke pointed up the value of pictures to encourage reading in *Some thoughts*, p. 212, sec. 156. For Fenn’s development of visual games, see Andrea Immel, ‘Frederick Lock’s Scrapbook’, pp. 72-3.

¹³⁷ Fenn, *Spelling book*, p. 69. Michael gives an account of the discussion among educationists about the best method for splitting syllables, noting that both Lowe and Lowth advocated division where it would assist pronunciation. See *The Teaching of English*, p. 85. Jackson acknowledges that Fenn systematised the use of the ‘split-word’ in progressive text, but notes its use in earlier books, including a chapbook version of Fielding’s *The governess*. See *Engines of Instruction*, p. 136 (261 n.).

practise in this word-building method: ‘Wil-li-am, do you know what a Fa-ble is?’¹³⁸ Only when the child masters these simple words is he considered ready to move on to the more challenging dialogues in the second volume of *Cobwebs* and to widen his reading experience beyond Fenn’s specially prepared lessons.

Spelling book includes a list of other easy readers published by Marshall to which the book is ‘designed as an Introduction’, as well as a catalogue of Mrs Teachwell’s ‘Works’.¹³⁹ Fenn also provides a separate catalogue of suitable first readers entitled ‘The Child’s Library’, which she ‘ventures to recommend to young mothers for their children’.¹⁴⁰ As well as listing her own ‘Mrs Teachwell’ range of books, Fenn suggests a number of titles from other publishing houses, such as Mrs Barbauld’s *Lessons*, and Mrs Trimmer’s *Little spelling book*, even giving a puff for the latter in the introduction to her own *Spelling book*.¹⁴¹ This suggested reading list, although extremely modest in its capacity, anticipates Trimmer’s *The Guardian of Education* (1802-6) in its recognition of the need to guide mothers in their choice of suitable books.¹⁴² It not only demonstrates Fenn’s authority as a children’s educator, but her affiliation to a movement of likeminded women writers supplying nursery literature for young children.

Marshall undoubtedly requested this promotional list linking the titles.¹⁴³ The publisher’s anticipation that parents might want to create a library of useful books indicates that he had identified an audience of affluent parents prepared to invest in their children’s education. The *Cobwebs* volumes, selling at one shilling apiece, were expensive when compared with other books he published; for example,

138 Fenn, *Morals to a set of fables*, p. 9.

139 The list of books that *Spelling book* introduces follows the title-page. ‘A Complete Set of Mrs. Teachwell’s Works’ appears at the end of *Spelling book*.

140 Fenn, *Spelling book*, following p. xv.

141 The catalogue follows the ‘Preface’ to *Spelling book*. For Fenn’s puff for Trimmer see pp. xiv-xv. It is possible that Fenn’s comment reciprocated an endorsement for the *Art of teaching* in Trimmer’s *The little spelling book for young children*, 2nd edn. (Printed for Joseph Johnson, 1786), p. vi. Johnson also published Barbauld. Marshall was Trimmer’s publisher for *Description of a set of prints of scripture history: contained in a set of easy lessons* [1787].

142 *The Guardian of Education* was the first journal to devote itself to issues surrounding children’s literature.

143 Fenn gave puffs for other Marshall titles, for example, *The imperial spelling book*, in *Cobwebs*, I, p. xxii. Fenn repeats the puff in *Fables in monosyllables*, p. xviii, and *Art of teaching*, p. 25, where she notes its suitability for use with the reading ‘screen’ included with *Set of toys*, which isolated a single line of type.

Dorothy Kilner's *Little stories for little folks*, or Mary Ann Kilner's *Familiar dialogues*, both illustrated easy readers of similar number of pages to *Cobwebs*, which sold for a more modest 'Four Pence Bound and Gilt'.¹⁴⁴ The complete set of Mrs Teachwell's nursery books advertised in *Cobwebs* cost thirteen shillings, placing it out of reach of the average family budget.¹⁴⁵ This elite positioning demonstrates Marshall's confidence in attracting a prosperous middle-class audience.¹⁴⁶ Marshall also advertised the cheaper Kilner titles alongside Fenn's books in 'The Series of Little Volumes to which [Mrs Teachwell's] *Spelling lessons* are designed as an Introduction', indicating that he was not aiming exclusively at a wealthy clientele, but trying to reach a wide audience.¹⁴⁷ An advertisement published in 1793, 'A Catalogue of John Marshall's Publications, for the Instruction and Amusement of Young Minds', shows that the publisher produced a wide range of titles (12 of the "Mrs Teachwell" books are listed) priced between three shillings and one penny (Fig. 2.15).¹⁴⁸ Marshall was, therefore, astute in his marketing strategy, linking Fenn's titles to her own series, and using them as a promotional vehicle for other titles from his publishing house, as well advertising them in his umbrella series of books for young minds.

Fenn's reading programme was thus suited to the capacity of small children, and recognised the need to encourage their enjoyment of learning through playful visual methods. She viewed reading books as a reward for learning the letters of the alphabet and the rudiments of grammar, and devised her lessons to help children move as quickly as possible to reading 'real' books of their own. The advice to mothers proffered in *Art of teaching* and *Spelling book* encouraged their role as nursery educators. Designed as a tailor-made elementary reader, *Cobwebs* was an

144 [Dorothy Kilner], *Little stories for little folks, in easy lessons of one, two, and three syllables* (London: Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co, [1785?]). [Mary Ann Kilner], *Familiar dialogues for the instruction and amusement of children of four and five years old* (Printed and sold by J. Marshall and Co., [1795?]). The 1788 edition of Part I of Barbauld's *Lessons for children of three years old* was sold by J. Johnson for 6d.

145 *Cobwebs* (each volume 1s.), *Fables in monosyllables* (2s.), *Fables* (1s. 6d.), *Juvenile correspondence* (1s. 6d.), *Rational sports* (1s.), *School occurrences* (1s.), *School dialogues* in two volumes (4s.), all published in 1783. See advertisement for 'Mrs Teachwell' books, *Cobwebs*, I, final 2pp.

146 For analysis of the way publishers appealed to parents' aspirations in marketing children's books and toys see Dawson, 'Trade and Plumb-Cake'.

147 The advertisement (printed after the title page in *Spelling book*) includes the two volumes of *Cobwebs*, *Fables by Mrs Teachwell*, plus a further six unattributed books (four by Dorothy Kilner, one by Mary Ann Kilner, and another by an unknown writer).

148 Catalogue of John Marshall, bookseller, 1793. British Museum Heal, 17.97.

essential component of this highly innovative reading scheme.

Graded reading in *Cobwebs*

Fenn created the graded dialogues in *Cobwebs* as a progressive set of lessons designed to build a child's confidence in reading. She understood that the vocabulary a child first encountered would need to be very simple and the dialogue representative of the exchanges a child might have with his mother. 'Supply them with phrases similar to their own, and they will delight in books', she advises mothers in *Art of teaching*.¹⁴⁹ 'The Window' in *Cobwebs* is written in words of no more than three letters. This results in a somewhat pedestrian text, as the author readily admits in her 'Advertisement', when she asks mothers to 'pardon such inaccuracies as arise from the necessity of confining the language to short words'.¹⁵⁰ For example, 'Why may not we go yet?'¹⁵¹ The simplification of language dispenses with the need to get to grips with the linking of syllables, and may also serve as an example of what the author describes as 'infantile language': the approximations of English usage displayed in the talk of very young children.¹⁵² However, in simplifying a child's language Fenn remains true to her rational agenda; she does not adopt the whimsical style of later children's writers such as Mrs Molesworth, who invented 'baby' language for some of her characters.¹⁵³

The conversations set out in *Cobwebs* – for example, between a child and his mother, between grandson and grandfather, or between two children chatting to each other – are designed to facilitate shared reading, in which the mother and child might each take a part to read aloud. For example, the exchange between the boy and his mother in 'The morning', a story in which they plan a trip to the toyshop:

MAMMA.

Now get up, it is six.

¹⁴⁹ Fenn, *Art of teaching*, p. 16.

¹⁵⁰ *Cobwebs*, I, xii. A similar note of apology is made in *Cobwebs* II, p. 75, when Fenn explains that using vocabulary in monosyllables of no more than five or six letters makes the dialogues 'stiff and rambling'.

¹⁵¹ 'The window', Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. 39.

¹⁵² Fenn, *Cobwebs*, p. vii.

¹⁵³ See, for example, Floss saying "Baby dood too, mamma," or Carrots saying "Have you thinkened, Floss?". [Mary Louisa Molesworth, nee Stewart (1839-1921)] Mrs Molesworth, "Carrots:" *Just a little boy* (Macmillan and Co., 1880; first publ. 1876), pp. 9, 24.

BOY.

O me! Is it six?

MAMMA.

Yes, it is; and the dew is off.

BOY.

I see the sun. It is fit for me to go out.¹⁵⁴

The conversational style is clearly designed to seem authentic and familiar. The location of the story in the child's bedroom provides a recognisable point of reference for the child, to help him feel comfortable with the reading book. (See Chapter Six for details of the illustration for 'The morning'.) Moreover, the dialogue form permits Fenn a subtle kind of dual address, in which she simultaneously provides young children with a model for how they should conduct themselves and gives instruction on effective parenting to adult readers. Early rising had been prescribed by Locke and was, of course, a virtue much trumpeted in children's books of the period, showing that disciplined living was considered important.¹⁵⁵

Fenn's intention to 'meet the smile of Mothers', as well as please children is illustrated in the way the author includes the adult's point of view in her dialogues.¹⁵⁶ For example, in 'The toy-shop', when the exasperated mother says: 'My dear, I would have you know your own mind', or her annoyance when the child wants to explore her boxes of things on the dressing table in 'The toilet': 'My dear! Lay it down when you are bid *to do* so; do not wait to be made to do well [...]'¹⁵⁷ Even within the very constrained form of this elementary reader, Fenn is attempting a complex message. She humorously sympathizes with the parent by demonstrating her understanding of the frustrations of dealing with small children, suggesting strategies for inculcating good behaviour. At the same time she shows her child reader that she fully understands the experience of choosing the best toy or wanting to touch

¹⁵⁴ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. 31-2.

¹⁵⁵ Locke suggested 'it is of great Use to accustom them to rise early in the Morning'. *Some thoughts*, p. 97, sec. 21. For contemporary examples see: 'The sluggard', in Watts, *Divine songs*, p. 44; 'He that will thrive / Must rise by five', in *The history of little Goody Two-Shoes*, 3rd edn (Printed for T. Carnan and F. Newbery, 1772), p. 39; 'The sun shines. Open your eyes little boy. Get up', in [Anna Barbauld], *Lessons for children, from two to three years old* (1779; J. Johnson, 1787), p. 9.

¹⁵⁶ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. xiii.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 65.

interesting things. Fenn is thus aware of her relationship with both the adult and child audience and demonstrates extraordinary skill in mastering the dual address.

Fenn's stories in *Cobwebs* are shaped to the needs of young children, not just in the grading of the reading material, but in the way that they portray typical childhood experiences for the two age groups. For example, younger children are shown at a stage of their development in which they are absorbing information about very simple events in everyday life at home, such as when to get up in the morning, while the dialogues for children over five show them being allowed more freedom in activities outside the home. This is reflected in the illustrations for each story, which in the first volume show children playing at their mother's knee, with siblings, or pets at home, while in the second volume more than half of the stories for children over five show the child in situations outside home. Penny Brown notes the potency of illustrations in creating an image of the 'implied reader' as conceptualized by Wolfgang Iser; texts were rendered more effective as vehicles for morals and manners as writers attempted to 'enter the child's world by depicting typical childhood activities'.¹⁵⁸ Fenn uses the dialogues to create an idealised picture of family life in which children are guided, supported and encouraged to learn to take their place in society.

Family life is central to the young child's experience in both sets of stories. The grand house interiors in the pictures display the wealth and privilege of upper-middle-class life, with their elegantly furnished panelled rooms, high ceilings and large windows. The mother's bedroom, shown in 'The toilet', for example, has a dressing table with a looking glass in which she is doing her hair while her maid attends, and the floor appears to be covered in carpet.¹⁵⁹ The illustrations show home life as child readers might experience it, so that even if they do not share the same privileged environment as the children in the pictures they can identify with the activities depicted.¹⁶⁰ Gender roles are made explicit, both in the text and the

¹⁵⁸ Penny Brown, 'Capturing (and Captivating) Childhood', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies*, 31 (2008), 419-49.

¹⁵⁹ Fenn, *Cobwebs* I, p. 64.

¹⁶⁰ Grenby suggests that 'authors, illustrators and publishers of children's books [of the period] strove extremely hard to provide texts in which the child reader could recognize him or herself'. See *The Child Reader*, p. 21.

illustrations. The daughter in ‘The toilet’, for example, is playing at being a grown woman by trying on her mother’s cap, showing that childhood play is considered as preparation for growing up (Fig. 2.16). This image of girls playing mothers is displayed in several illustrations: the cut for ‘The baby-house’ shows two girls imagining themselves to be mothers as they play with a doll’s house; the cut for ‘The doll’, in which mother, daughter and doll are used to indicate the trajectory from infancy to motherhood; and the cut for ‘The fan’ shows a small girl taking responsibility for her little brother while her mother receives a social call from ‘a lady’ (Fig. 2.17).¹⁶¹ Fenn uses the stories to offer girls a model for good mothering; for example, in ‘The doll’ the girl promises that she will read to the doll from her ‘new book’, and in ‘Useful play’, a girl shows her friend how to play a reading game to enable her to teach her younger brother.¹⁶² These dialogues are thus designed to prime girls for their role as teachers in the nursery.

However, the supervisory role of siblings is not limited to girls. In ‘The window’, for instance, a boy of around eight is directing the movements of his younger brother, and he must show him how to behave in exemplary fashion. The younger boy, who is being encouraged to climb on to the window ledge to share the excitement of the scene outside, has long hair and is wearing a dress, as was the norm for small boys in Georgian Britain. When the younger boy wants to run outside, he is prevented by his brother, who reminds him: ‘do as you are bid, and do not ask why, — is the law for a boy’, reiterating Fenn’s rule of obedience.¹⁶³ A similar scenario is enacted in ‘The fair’, which shows a boy extrapolating that if his mother had forbidden him to take a ride on the Merry-go-round she might similarly object if he allows his younger brother to ride the ‘Toss-about’. The boy’s judgement is shown to be prescient when a child is thrown from the broken ride, leading his brother

161 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, ‘The baby house’, p. 88; ‘The doll’, p. 58; ‘The fan’, p. 69.

162 ‘The doll’, Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. 60-1; ‘Useful play’, Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, pp. 5-12. Fenn also refers to the benefits of a child reading to her doll in *Art of teaching*, p. 15, and suggests that the elder daughter of a large family should supervise the play of her siblings and ‘be adroit in seconding the views of her mother’ (p. 6). Dorothy Kilner imitated Fenn’s dialogic conversations between a mother and child in *The doll’s spelling book* (Printed and sold by J. Marshall, [ca. 1802]). See O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, pp. 113-14.

163 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. 39.



Fig. 2.16 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), I, 'The toilet'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)



Fig. 2.17 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), I, 'The fan'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)

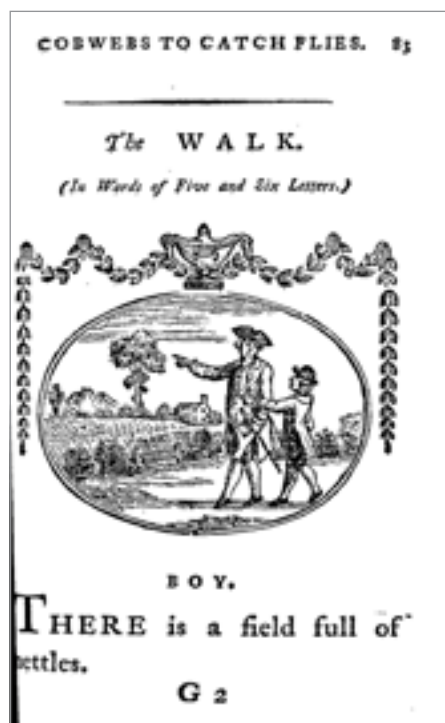


Fig. 2.18 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), I, 'The walk'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)



Fig. 2.19 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), II, 'The flies'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)

to conclude: “‘How happy am I to have an elder brother who is so prudent!’”¹⁶⁴ In her ‘Address’ to children Fenn underlines the system of benefit and responsibility that the hierarchical structure of family life engenders when she acknowledges the older child’s superior social standing in being entitled to look at the volume of *Cobwebs* first, while simultaneously pointing out his obligation to make use of the privilege by reading the ‘Address’ to younger siblings.¹⁶⁵ It is thus shown that privilege is earned through self-control and duty to others.

The absence of the father-figure in all but one of the first volume stories, ‘The walk’, suggests that his role was not considered significant in the nursery and supports the idea that the mother was, at least theoretically, the key figure in the middle-class domestic environment.¹⁶⁶ ‘It is the father’s province to attend to the school education; I design to treat of that which belongs to the mother,’ she informs readers in *Rational sports*.¹⁶⁷ In the illustration for ‘The walk’ father and son are formally dressed, each sporting long coat and breeches, stockings and hat. The boy adopts the same stance as the father, who is pointing to the field of nettles referred to in the story; the figure of the boy describes the image of man that he is to become (Fig. 2.18). Fenn’s dialogue expresses the commonly held view that a boy’s education involved preparation for manhood and being able to take his place in the world, and that the father should provide the proper role model. In Volume II, the father appears only twice, but on each occasion he shows how young boys should behave. In ‘The flies’ he is present at the breakfast table in casual conversation with his son about ‘idle’ boys (Fig. 2.19), and in ‘The stubborn child’ he is shown delivering a lecture on obedience to a boy who does not want to attend school.¹⁶⁸ The man of privilege and social standing is thus shown to have a duty of care for all the children in the community.

Class values such as these are examined throughout the dialogues, and Fenn shows

164 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, p. 27. O’Malley notes: ‘Instilling discipline, and ideally the mechanisms for self-discipline, was as essential to the discourse of middle-class pedagogy as it was to the discourse of medical management’. See *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 101.

165 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. xix-xx.

166 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, pp. 83-7.

167 Fenn, *Rational sports*, p. xi.

168 *Cobwebs*, II, pp. 31-3 and 44-52.

how upper middle-class children should comport themselves in society. Several of Fenn's stories in the second volume are used to demonstrate that wealth does not always bring greater reward or happiness. In 'The cottage garden', Fenn explains in a note that 'The little boy is supposed to be at the house of a tenant, and at play with the son of the tenant'.¹⁶⁹ However, although she demonstrates that wealth brings privilege, for example in the fact that the son of the landowner has toys and eats grapes, figs, plums and peaches while the country boy has none, her story shows the first boy admitting that he quickly gets bored with his toys, and suggests that the tenant's son has learned useful farming skills in growing his own fruit and tending livestock.¹⁷⁰ Similarly, in 'The country visit', the girl calls to thank a village woman who had nursed her back to health, thus demonstrating the care and kindness shown by the serving classes.¹⁷¹ Fenn clearly intends both stories to teach children to appreciate the values of working people living an honest rural life. Nevertheless, child readers are made aware of the rigid class structure of the period.

The obligation of the upper and middling classes to be charitable is also explored by Fenn in several stories. In the first volume dialogue 'The baby-house', the conversation between two girls playing with their dolls mimics that of adults talking about furniture and fashion, but the moral intent of the story is made clear when the second girl in the story tells of a trip with her aunt to buy silk to make a new best coat for her doll and they encounter 'a poor child who had no cloaths (*sic*), but the worst rags which you can think'.¹⁷² The crown intended for the silk is given to the pitiful child and the girl avers: 'I had more joy in that, than I could have had in my doll's new gown. Dolls cannot feel the want of cloaths (*sic*)'.¹⁷³ This is a gentle reminder to the middle-class child reader about privilege and social conscience. Fenn presents children in an idealised way in order to offer the child reader a model for virtuous action and to show the pleasure that might be gained from the

169 *Cobwebs*, II, p. 76.

170 Locke cautioned against buying toys, believing children should devise their own playthings. See *Some thoughts*, pp. 191-2, sec. 130,

171 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, pp. 82-7.

172 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. 93.

173 *Ibid.*, p. 94.

kind gesture.¹⁷⁴ Several of the pictures highlight social issues of the day, showing individuals that a child might encounter. For example, in ‘The happy family’ a small boy and his mother greet a shabbily clothed woman, who has arrived at the gates of their impressive home.¹⁷⁵ The contrast in style of dress and demeanour of the old woman, who is hobbling along with a stick, points up the difference between rich and poor. The boy’s hand is extended in a gesture that reaches out to help the woman, thus giving the child reader the message that such people are to be given charity.

Fenn’s model for good behaviour also encompasses the kind treatment of animals, and several stories centre on pets, farm animals, or other creatures.¹⁷⁶ For example, in ‘The hedgehog’, an elderly gentleman walking with his well-behaved grandson, William Gentle, admonishes some boys who are mistreating a hedgehog.¹⁷⁷ In ‘The fan’, when the girl imagines the scene printed on a fan, showing a boy running to catch a bird:

GIRL.

[...] Do not hurt the poor bird.

You must be good and kind.

You must not vex the bird [...]

Miss! You must be good. You must tell the boy to be good; that we may love him. All good folk will love him if he is good; not else.¹⁷⁸

174 Happiness achieved through benevolence was a familiar trope of children’s literature of the period; see Plumb, ‘The New World of Children’, p. 83 (article) p. 304 (chapter). Grenby, however, highlights the fact that charity was ‘not treated as an uncomplicated virtue’; the role of the donor was ‘enveloped in a complex code of proprieties which authors sought to teach to their readers’. See M. O. Grenby, ‘Real Charity Makes Distinctions’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 25 (2002), 185-202 (p. 190). O’Malley similarly notes that the ‘proper recipients of charity had not only to be financially distressed, but humble, deferential, industrious, and impoverished by misfortune, rather than by their own profligacy’. See *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 58.

175 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, p. 13.

176 Fenn reflects Locke’s observations that children have a tendency to mistreat animals. See *Some thoughts*, p. 180-2, sec. 116. O’Malley suggests Fenn’s stories about kindness to animals were designed to teach children to curb their natural instinct to despise the poverty of their social inferiors. See *The Making of the Modern Child*, p. 57.

177 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, II, p. 61. Kindness to animals and respect for nature featured in other books of the period, for example, Sarah Trimmer’s *Fabulous histories* (Printed for T. Longman; G. G. J. and J. Robinson; J. Johnson, 1786), a book that Fenn recommends in the preface to her natural history book: *The rational dame*, p. xvii. Trimmer’s book, later known as *The history of the robins*, remained in print throughout the nineteenth century, when cruelty to animals was to become a familiar trope in children’s literature, most notably in Anna Sewall’s *Black beauty* (1877).

178 Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. 71-2. For dialogues promoting kindness to animals see *Cobwebs*, I: ‘The cat’, ‘The dog’, ‘The farm-yard’; Volume II: ‘The flies’, ‘The spider’, ‘The bird’. A natural-history lesson is incorporated in ‘The bees’ in *Cobwebs*, II.

This message that good children will be loved is typical of books of this period, in which moral guidance is offered through the action displayed by the characters in a story.

The fact that Fenn wrote the stories to suit the images that she cut out to create her homemade copy of *Cobwebs* demonstrates that she felt that picture and word should work together to create meaning for the child, and for the most part this was achieved. However, the images would have been redrawn as woodcuts specially styled for publication, perhaps allowing the engraver some room for interpretation. This seems likely in the illustrations for 'The fair', which effectively subverts Fenn's moral position in the story. In her prefatory 'Address' Fenn tells readers that her nephew had been given a book with some cuts showing children riding in a Merry-go-round, but she 'did not like the story at all'.¹⁷⁹ As shown earlier, Fenn's alternative dialogue is intended to serve as a warning about such dangerous rides. Nevertheless, the illustrator seems to have made every attempt to give an impression of just how much fun might be had at the fair, accentuating the wildness of thrilling rides and highlighting the comic aspects of Fenn's cautionary tale.

In the first cut a crowd of children are shown gathered on the village green to watch an entertainer perform a trick with fire (Fenn concedes in the story that the boys enjoyed seeing 'wild beasts', 'peeping in shew-boxes' and hearing 'drums, trumpets, and fiddles'); in the second vignette a child is seen falling from an unsupervised Merry-go-round (thus showing why the boys had been cautioned against taking the ride); the third cut shows a primitive wooden Ferris wheel (presumably the faulty Toss-about) crammed with children (Figs. 2.20-2.22). Each cut thus works as a counterpoint to the dialogue, because the presentation of the exciting scenes undermines Fenn's rational safety lesson, stimulating rather than repressing children's interest in the rides. The inclusion of three cuts to illustrate the dialogue (every other story has just one) suggests that Marshall wanted to make a feature of the story, with its focus on the carnival pleasure of fair-ground entertainment, perhaps trying to enliven a collection of stories which otherwise focus on good

¹⁷⁹ Fenn, *Cobwebs*, I, p. xxii.



Fig. 2.20 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), II, 'The fair'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)



Fig. 2.21 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), II, 'The fair'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)

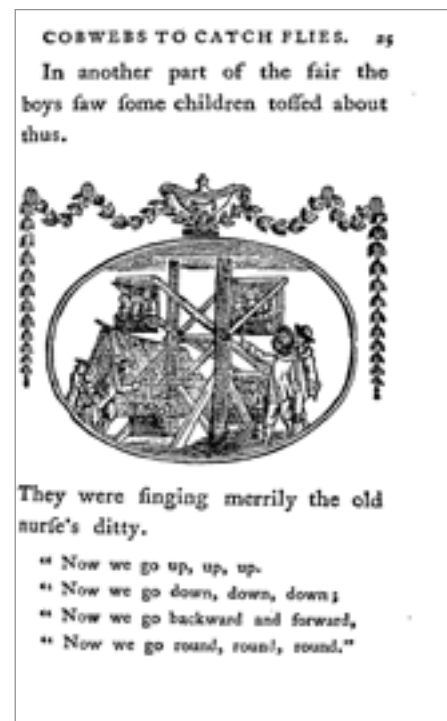


Fig. 2.22 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783]), II, 'The fair'. © British Library Board 1210.1.1.(2.)

behaviour and humdrum events. It is evident, therefore, that the illustrations in *Cobwebs* were central to Fenn's aim to make reading interesting for children, but that they were not entirely under her control. This potential for misinterpretation of Fenn's moral story is probably what prompted the SPCK to drop the story completely from its 1840s Sunday school edition.¹⁸⁰

The simple language of the reading lessons in *Cobwebs* thus belies the complex ideological framework that underpins Fenn's concept of nursery education. The stories embody the social and cultural expectations of the middling classes, tutoring young children in their duties and obligations through example questions in the dialogues and scripting the mother's responses to allow her to guide the child. Fenn perceived a need for books and toys that would enable young mothers to teach their young children more effectively. It was her desire to reach this audience that brought her into contact with John Marshall and enabled her to become an influential figure in the development of the nursery market in the late eighteenth century.

It is clear that the honeymoon period of the business arrangement between Fenn and Marshall was over by the time that *Spelling book* was published in 1787. Clues in the author's various prefaces, and other circumstantial evidence, suggest that Marshall was a shrewd business operator who may have taken advantage of Fenn's 'benevolent intention of smoothing the path of infancy'.¹⁸¹ The commercial drive of Marshall's venture forced the author to make concessions in her work. In her preface to the primer, Fenn explains that she had been obliged to abandon efforts to mark the accent on two-syllable words to make it possible for the child to 'have conned his lesson without some attention from the teacher', because 'those pages were cancelled, and the plan relinquished'; the author also expresses her disappointment at the layout of the reading lessons:

180 *Cobwebs to catch flies; or, Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children. A new edition* (Printed for the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1852?]; first publ. [1844]). See Chapter Six for editing of later editions.

181 Fenn, *Spelling book*, p. xv.

Those lessons would have appeared much more pleasing had they occupied a greater space; but the increase of price might have been a bar to the general use which Mrs. *Teachwell's love of children* makes her wish; on which account she relinquished the scheme [...]¹⁸²

Marshall had clearly intervened to veto Fenn's extravagant ideas, and she had been forced to concede, under threat that the book might not be published at all. Although Fenn's complaint is politely phrased, it is surprising that she was allowed to print it at all, and it is possible the 'disclaimer' was permitted in order to placate the author's obvious displeasure at having to compromise her exacting standards.¹⁸³ This evidence suggests the interdependence of author and publisher in bringing the work to the public, and some tensions created by their differing agendas.

Fenn produced the last of her 'Mrs Teachwell' series in 1790, but went on to create two more highly successful titles for Marshall, *The child's grammar* and *The mother's grammar*, both published anonymously around 1791.¹⁸⁴ Thereafter, following the death of her husband in 1794, Fenn assumed her new persona as 'Mrs Lovechild' and changed her publishing arrangements, although she did not entirely sever ties with her first publisher until 1798.¹⁸⁵ Fenn, of course, had no rights over the highly successful books that she had innocently signed over to Marshall, and the publisher continued to market *Cobwebs* as part of the 'Mrs Teachwell' range, including it in a 'Complete Catalogue' of her books published at the end of the century and retaining an interest in the title right up until his death in 1828.¹⁸⁶ Fenn's association with Elizabeth Newbery was to result in a range of new titles and teaching schemes, including *The infant's delight* (c.1797) and *The infant's path strewn with flowers* (c. 1798), sparking a publishing war in which Marshall engaged in spoiling tactics; he brought out two new titles of his

182 Fenn, *Spelling book*, pp. xii-xiii.

183 Marshall does not appear to have been concerned with maintaining standards. I discuss this further in Chapter Six.

184 Fenn's final 'Mrs Teachwell' title was *A short history of quadrupeds* (c. 1790) See Stoker, 'Establishing Lady Fenn's Canon', p. 67, no. 17.

185 Fenn's break with Marshall seems to have coincided with his dispute with Hannah More regarding his excessive profits on her Cheap Repository Tracts. See Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn', p. 841. More described him as 'selfish, tricking and disobliging from first to last'. See letter to Zachary Macaulay, September 1797, cited in O'Connell, *The Popular Print in England*, p. 142, (234 n.).

186 *A complete catalogue of Mrs. Teachwell's books* ([John Marshall, 1798?]). The list includes 18 titles.

own with the same titles in order to try and preserve his marketing lead.¹⁸⁷ Newbery responded in turn, bringing out a French edition of *Cobwebs, Toiles d'araignées pour attraper les mouches* (1799), along with other new titles.¹⁸⁸ The battle for the nineteenth-century children's book market had begun.

Summary

In this chapter I have shown that Ellenor Fenn's pioneering reading scheme helped establish a discrete market for nursery reading in the late eighteenth century. Fenn's reading programme was tailored to meet the social and educational needs of children of the emerging middling classes, but both author and publisher engaged this potential audience through a variety of promotional devices.¹⁸⁹ Fenn's assumed persona as 'Mrs Teachwell' helped create a reputable 'brand' of books and games, establishing her authority as an educationist and John Marshall's reputation as the leading 'Children's Printer'.

Fenn's appreciation of the importance of a visual component to reading sets her apart from other amateur writers for young children. However, she viewed herself as part of a community of writers with a shared objective to improve nursery education and encourage children to become good citizens. Fenn's dialogues were designed to inculcate Christian values, such as obedience to parents, but she also wanted to instil a love of reading. Fenn understood that to achieve this objective she needed to motivate and support a generation of mothers to become confident and competent educators of their children. Her influential instruction books provided mothers with ready-made lessons and convinced them of their vital role in education. Fenn's contribution to the history of reading is, therefore, highly significant and worthy of the critical attention it has recently received.

Fenn's stories in *Cobwebs* display typical late-eighteenth-century gender roles, with the mother as homemaker with responsibility for childcare and the father as

187 For Marshall's spoiling tactics, see Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn', p. 841.

188 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 16, no. 14.

189 Grenby likewise, contends that the establishment of children's literature by the beginning of the nineteenth century was 'as much the result of changing habits of consumption and institutions of acquirement as of authorial innovation or developments in publishing'. See *The Child Reader*, p. 193.

material provider and social regulator, and it has been argued by some critics that women writers merely helped to perpetuate a patriarchal agenda.¹⁹⁰ However, I have demonstrated that Fenn did more than simply support the status quo; she encouraged women to take a more prominent role in teaching their children, and to appreciate that girls as well as boys could benefit from education. Her popular nursery books were some of the first to recognise the needs of a dual audience of parent and child, providing simple-to-follow lessons to help a mother and her child to read together.

The promotion of *Cobwebs* cannot, therefore, be viewed in isolation; the interlinking of the various ‘Mrs Teachwell’ products, as well as the recruitment of the author to promote her works, represents a deliberate effort on the part of Marshall to reap the maximum sales return on each of the components of the reading programme. Whether she realised it, or not, Fenn had been signed up to the equivalent of a modern-day author’s promotional tour, and the ‘Mrs Teachwell’ range of home-learning books and teaching aids can be seen as the first example of a carefully planned commercial educational series for very young children.

Fenn’s books and games were widely appreciated, and the *Gentleman’s Magazine* paid tribute to her philanthropic efforts ‘for the benefit of the rising generation’.¹⁹¹ Writing ten years after her death, William Frere, for whom many of Fenn’s stories were written, and who later became a distinguished academic, gratefully acknowledged his aunt’s contribution to a department of literature ‘calculated for the improvement of the first studies on infancy’, noting in an introduction to Sir John Fenn’s edition of the Paston Letters that the works of Mrs Teachwell and Mrs Lovechild ‘still hold a distinguished place in the juvenile library’.¹⁹² Fenn’s works, he observed, were ‘ever directed to inculcate religious principles, to convey rational and useful information, and to encourage the best and kindest affections of the

190 Mary Hilton, *Women and the Shaping of the Nation’s Young*, p. 35. Beth Kowalski-Wallace cited in Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 173.

191 Obituary, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 83, November 1813, p. 508.

192 William Frere, ‘Advertisement Containing Notices of the Life of Sir J. Fenn’, in *Original Letters with notes by John Fenn*, [*The Paston Letters*], 5 vols (G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1787-1823), 5, p. xxv.

heart'.¹⁹³ Indeed, the simple stories of everyday life that Fenn created in *Cobwebs* not only influenced other writers, but provided inspirational first reading for many leading nineteenth-century figures, as I will detail in Chapter Six. The lasting success of Fenn's well-crafted first reader is a testament to her gift for marrying instruction with amusement.

Popular titles such as *Cobwebs* laid a firm foundation for the future development of the nursery market, bringing a steady income to publishers that enabled them to experiment with new forms of literature. One such publisher, John Harris, who inherited many of Fenn's titles when he took over Elizabeth Newbery's business, launched an innovative series of mass-market coloured picture reading books that invigorated the nursery market at the beginning of the nineteenth century, toppling Marshall's pre-eminence as a children's publisher. In the next chapter I examine the impact of Harris's exciting picture-book series.

193 Frere, 'Advertisement Containing Notices of the Life of Sir J. Fenn', p. xxv.

CHAPTER THREE

John Harris and the rise of the picturebook

At Harris's St. Paul's Churchyard,
Good children meet a sure reward [...]
With covers neat, and cuts so pretty,
There's not its like in all the city.¹

By the beginning of the nineteenth century the work of Fenn and the other rational moralists had created a strong market for educational books among the middle classes. However, the lack of imaginative content began to attract criticism. John Harris, successor to Elizabeth Newbery's firm, was the first to anticipate demand for children's books designed purely for entertainment.² The instant success of two of Harris's light-hearted picture rhyme books, *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* (1805) and *The butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast* (1807), which were completely devoid of any moral content, demonstrated that the market was ripe for change.³ Illustrated with high-class engravings, and available in exciting hand-coloured versions, both books were instant sell-outs, encouraging Harris to publish a series of colourful and amusing titles, which his competitors were quick to emulate.⁴ Harris showed extraordinary skill in selecting top-selling titles, which gave him the edge over rivals such as Darton, Godwin and Tabart and placed him at the forefront of mass-market nursery publishing.

Nevertheless, Harris was astute in recognising an opportunity to sustain interest in moral nursery books. As well as continuing to publish well-established authors, such as Ellenor Fenn, Dorothy Kilner and Sarah Trimmer, inherited from Elizabeth

1 *Dame Partlett's farm* (Printed for J. Harris, 1804). Moon 178. See facsimile pages, including the rhyme, in Andrew W. Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books* (The Leadenhall Press, 1898-9), 95-7, p. 96.

2 Harris took over Elizabeth Newbery's firm in 1801. See Marjorie Moon, *John Harris's Books for Youth 1801-1843; A Check-list* (Cambridge: Printed for Moon and Spilman in Association with Five Owls Press, 1976), p. 1. I cite from this edition, hereafter referred to as 'Moon' followed by the item number or page number. More titles were added separately in Marjorie Moon, *A Supplement to John Harris's Books for Youth 1801-1843* (Richmond, Yorkshire: Printed for Moon in Association with Five Owls Press, 1983). Dawson published an edition with the same item numbering in 1992.

3 Sarah Catherine Martin, *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her dog* (Printed for J. Harris, 1805) William Roscoe, *The butterfly's ball, and the grasshopper's feast* (Printed for J. Harris, 1807).

4 For details of editions see Moon 559, 725.

Newbery, he published a collection of cautionary tales by a new writer, Elizabeth Turner (1776-1847), which delivered moral instruction in the more palatable form of verse, thus bridging the gap between the two extremes of the nursery market. The first of Turner's collections of age-graded verse, *The daisy: or, cautionary stories in verse, adapted to the ideas of children, from four to eight years old* was published in 1807.⁵

With his gift for picking winning authors (three of his top-selling authors are featured below) and skill in marketing his publishing list, Harris quickly established himself as the leading publisher in an increasingly competitive and diverse market.⁶ In this chapter I will be examining how he built his publishing business by developing series links and creating a promotional publishing list, 'Harris's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction', which clearly defined his aim to provide entertainment as well as education. Harris was a dynamic publisher who is recognised as one of the key figures in the history of the picture reading book.⁷ His innovative approach helped to prime the market for more imaginative and experimental literary forms, inaugurating an exciting new era in children's publishing, often referred to as the 'Dawn of Levity', in which pictures and rhyme were established as essential components of early reading.⁸

Developing a mass-market strategy

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the debate about whether children should be reading improving or entertaining books was revived. In a letter to his close friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), written on 23rd October 1802, Charles Lamb (1775-1834) was incensed about the lack of imagination in children's books and the

5 Elizabeth Turner, *The daisy* (1807; Printed for J. Harris, successor to Elizabeth Newbery, and Crosby and Co, 1810). For editions see Moon 933. I cite from the 1810 edition BL 11645.de.53.

6 By 1800 around 600 children's titles were available in bookshops. See Margaret Clark, cited in Ruth B. Bottigheimer, 'The Book on the Bookseller's Shelf and the Book in the English Child's Hand', in *Culturing the Child 1690-1914: Essays in Memory of Mitzi Myers*, ed. Donelle Ruwe (Lanham, MD, Toronto and Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 3-28, (p. 24).

7 See, for example: Moon, pp. 1-8; Darton, pp. 199-203; Muir, *English Children's Books*, pp. 100-2; Alderson and Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, pp. 142-3.

8 Darton introduced the term in his title for Chapter XII of *Children's Books in England*, 'Interim Again: the Dawn of Levity' (pp. 199-218) and it has been widely adopted by children's literature historians, for example, Alderson and Oyens use it as a chapter heading in *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 118. Jackson notes that Mother Hubbard opened the floodgates to a 'tide of engagingly droll and occasionally witty poetry'. See her *Engines of Instruction, Mischief, and Magic*, p. 199.

effect that this might have on young readers; visiting the local bookshop with his sister Mary, he had been surprised to find that *Goody Two-Shoes* was ‘almost out of print’.⁹ ‘Mrs Barbauld [’s] stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; & the Shopman at Newbery’s hardly deigned to reach them’, he railed, noting that ‘Mrs B’s and Mrs Trimmer’s nonsense lay in piles about’,

[...] Think what you would have been now, if, instead of being fed with Tales and old wives’ fables in childhood, you had been crammed with Geography and Natural History.¹⁰

Lamb’s much quoted rant, which influenced negative critical opinion of moral writers, remains pertinent to the history of children’s literature, because it articulates the strong division of opinion about whether children’s literature should be *instructive*, or *amusing*.¹¹ It is also interesting because John Harris, erstwhile manager of Elizabeth Newbery’s publishing business, had recently acquired the St Paul’s Church Yard bookshop Lamb visited, and was already planning to fill it with imaginative children’s books. This would set Harris squarely in opposition to his rival John Marshall, who had vowed to publish only rational literature.¹²

Sarah Trimmer, of course, would have been unaware of Lamb’s vitriolic attack; nevertheless, she was poised to launch a counter-offensive in *The Guardian of Education*, a critical journal of children’s literature that commenced publication in the same year.¹³ As a leading figure in the Sunday School movement, author of

9 *The Letters of Charles and Mary Ann Lamb*, 2 vols, ed. Edwin W. Marris, Jr. (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), II: 1801-1809, pp. 81-3. John Newbery first published *Goody Two-Shoes* around 1765.

10 *Letters of Charles and Mary Ann Lamb*, ed. Marris, pp. 81-2. This argument was commonplace in Lamb’s circle. See Coleridge’s letter to Poole, 16 October 1797, ‘My early reading of Faery Tales, & Genii &c. &c. – my mind had been habituated to the *Vast* [...]’, cited in Rosemary Ashton, *The Life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), p. 14. See also Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, VI, 338-46 (1805); 341-6 (1850), ‘O! give us once again the wishing cap / Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coast of Jack the Giant-Killer [...] / The child whose love is here, at least doth reap / One precious gain—that he forgets himself.’, in *William Wordsworth The Prelude 1799, 1805, 1850*, ed. Jonathan Wordsworth (NY and London: W. W. Norton, 1979), pp. 170-1. For the ‘Romantic sponsorship’ of fairy tales, see Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism*, p. 118.

11 Lamb’s damning of the ‘cursed Barbauld crew’ in this correspondence influenced the opinions of twentieth-century critics, such as Muir, although feminist writers have successfully challenged the view. See Chapter Two.

12 John Marshall had vowed to publish children’s books divested of the ‘prejudicial Nonsense’ found in fairy tales. See his advertisement in [C., A.], *The footstep to Mrs. Trimmer’s Sacred history* (1785).

13 *The Guardian of Education* (1802-1806) was the first journal to devote itself to issues surrounding children’s literature.

many respected works on nature and the scriptures, as well as mother of twelve children, Mrs Trimmer considered herself well placed to offer her opinions on the suitability of children's books, which she vetted for signs of fantasy or lack of moral rectitude.¹⁴ As Grenby notes, Trimmer understood that children's literature was at a crossroads when she declared:

Perhaps there never has been a time since the creation of the world, when the important business of EDUCATION was more an object of general concern in any civilised nation [...]¹⁵

'The foundation of a good education', she advised, 'should be laid in *the* NURSERY'.¹⁶ It comes as no surprise that she criticised *Goody Two-Shoes*; although approving of its 'simplicity of style', she recommended that parents should censor it with 'a pair of scissors' to 'rectify' certain of its faults, and remedy others with 'proper explanation' to their children.¹⁷ However, while Trimmer found a ready audience for her new parenting guide, Lamb's comments on the hot-housing of nursery-age children clearly touched on current concerns. The overwhelming popularity of *Old Mother Hubbard* and *The butterfly's ball* indicates that Harris was attuned to the needs of middle-class parents: some were now willing to indulge their children with novelty books.

In the forty-year period following publication of *Goody Two Shoes*, children's books had gradually lost their playful element. Harris set out to rekindle something of the excitement generated by Newbery in the early days of children's publishing. As one of the successors to the famous firm he seized the opportunity to build on the reputation of the publishing house, reviving the central catch-line originally used in titles and sales notices: 'Instruction and amusement', but inverting it to

14 For biographical details, see Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, 'Trimmer, Sarah (1741-1810)', *ODNB*.

15 Matthew Grenby, 'Introduction', in Sarah Trimmer, *The Guardian of Education: A Periodical Work*, 5 vols (Bristol: Thoemmes Press and Edition Synapse, 2002), I, p. xii. For Trimmer's June 1802 statement see *ibid.*, I, p. 1. I cite from this facsimile edition of the original periodical published by J. Hatchard.

16 *The Guardian of Education*, I, p. 2.

17 *Ibid.*, pp. 430-1. Trimmer objected to *Goody Two-Shoes* on the grounds of its promotion of ghost stories, its views on animals and especially its representation of class attitudes.

place greater emphasis on the entertainment value of his books.¹⁸ At first, Harris also used the ‘successor to E. Newbery’ strap in publication details, to capitalise on the link with the well-established firm. This was essential to his marketing strategy, because he changed the name of the former Newbery premises to ‘The Juvenile Library’, the name of a bookshop he already owned in St Paul’s Churchyard.¹⁹ It also served to distinguish him from his competitors, several of whom also sold from bookshops named ‘Juvenile Library’.²⁰

Harris had considerable experience of wholesale bookselling going back some thirty years. He had been apprenticed to Thomas Evans, a well-established and highly regarded wholesale bookseller, and was appointed his principal assistant in 1778. Harris clearly showed great potential, and at Evans’s suggestion left London to manage a bookshop in Bury St Edmunds.²¹ However, eager to be at the heart of the London book trade, he moved jobs several times before settling at the Newbery publishing house under the direction of Elizabeth Newbery, who had been responsible for running the firm since the death of her husband Francis in 1780.²² According to Muir he was ‘bursting with new ideas’, which Elizabeth Newbery prudently avoided.²³

However, a catalogue of Harris’s stock dated 1803 shows that he, too, was initially cautious, publishing very few new items and selling either existing stock inherited from Newbery, or reprints.²⁴ This is evident from Lamb’s experience of the shop. However, an advertisement rhyme in *Dame Partlett’s farm* (1804), a precursor of *Mother*

18 Newbery’s landmark publication *A little pretty pocket-book* (1744) used the motto.

19 Two books published by E. Newbery in 1800, *The adventures of a silver penny* and *A collection of the most approved and entertaining stories*, carried an advertisement for Harris’s Juvenile Library, showing that he owned a shop before taking over the Newbery business. See Moon, p. 1.

20 William Godwin, Nathaniel Hailes and Benjamin Tabart all used the name ‘Juvenile Library’. Other competitors included, William Darton, Richard Phillips, James Wallis, A. K. Newman and Dean and Munday. See Darton, p. 203.

21 William West, also apprenticed to Evans, describes Harris as ‘possessing a considerable ability, with every other requisite, in attention, expedition and perseverance, to acquire a fortune’. William West, *Fifty years’ recollections of an old bookseller* (1836), cited in Moon, p. 1.

22 Francis Newbery, nephew to John Newbery, had inherited a portion of his uncle’s business in 1767. For the complicated history of the Newbery publishing house, see Darton, pp. 122-3, and Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, pp. 374-6. Harris had been working for Elizabeth Newbery for some time and acted as manager between 1797 and 1801. Moon, p. 1. Jill Shefrin, ‘Harris, John (1756-1846)’, *ODNB*.

23 Muir, *English Children’s Books*, p. 100.

24 Moon, p. 1.

Hubbard, indicates Harris's intention to amuse as well as instruct young children:

At Harris's, St Paul's Church-yard,
 Good children meet a sure reward [...]
 Then let us not buy drums or fiddles,
 Nor yet be stopt at pastry-cooks,
 But spend our money all in books;
 For when we've learned each book by heart
 Mamma will treat us with a tart.²⁵

The appearance of *Mother Hubbard* in 1805, printed with copperplate illustrations in a small square format, gave the first indication of Harris's marketing flair. The book's sing-song rhyme and amusing illustrations chimed with Lamb's nostalgic sentiment about old tales and fables. Two sequels were quickly published, constituting Harris's first mini-series. The success of *The butterfly's ball* two years later prompted Harris to create a further library of books in the same mould. They were all printed in large type on almost square paper (measuring approximately 12.6 x 9.2 cm), and similarly bound in coloured paper-wrappers; some of the covers carried a picture of his bookshop as an advertisement. Each title was adorned with high-quality illustrations, which were used as a selling-point in the titles.

The series style indicates that Harris understood the importance of branding. He planned his marketing strategy around establishing the 'Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction', which was calculated to appeal to children and their parents as it suggested itself simultaneously as a toy cupboard and a repository of learning. There were two distinct phases of development in the Cabinet: 1806-18 and 1819-24. The first series included around 25 of the signature square picture books, including several *Butterfly's ball* and *Mother Hubbard* imitations, as well as some exciting illustrated educational books, such as the alphabet book *Peter Prim's profitable present* (1809), and *Marmaduke Multiply's merry method of making minor mathematicians* (1816).²⁶ *Mother Hubbard*, *The butterfly's ball*, and *Daisy*

²⁵ *Dame Partlett's farm*, in Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books*, p. 96.

²⁶ [Peter Prim], *Peter Prim's profitable present to the little misses and masters of the United Kingdom*. (John Harris, 1809). Moon 681. *Marmaduke Multiply's merry method of making minor mathematicians* (Printed for John Harris, [1816-7]). Moon 520.

were not included in the list, which suggests that Harris used the Cabinet to promote less well-known titles.²⁷

The Cabinet represented only a small section of Harris's publishing activity, and by 1809 his general list included 419 items, including cheap educational titles priced between one penny and two shillings, as well as expensive reference works aimed at a wealthy adult clientele, such as Wakefield's botany at 6s. 6d., or Lavoisne's atlas at four guineas.²⁸ Like Marshall, one of his main competitors, Harris had a keen eye for sales opportunities, and he advertised the standard reference works, in order to attract customers to his Juvenile Library, where they could be tempted by his display of new children's books.²⁹ The second Cabinet series was launched in 1819 when Harris's son (also named John) joined the family business, creating the new imprint of John Harris and Son.³⁰ The series featured a new design and introduced some lively rhyming readers, as well as a novel range of coloured home-education books that used pictures to teach basic reading skills. These pioneering books were experimental, as well as controversial. They provided the stimulus for future developments in the nursery market and represent the forerunners of the instructive picture books devised by Walter Crane some forty years later.

Mother Hubbard

The publication of *Mother Hubbard* on 1 June 1805 is widely recognised as one of the landmarks in children's publishing. Moon deems *Mother Hubbard* to be the 'most significant' book that Harris ever published, and Alderson and Oyens note that Harris's success in exploiting the formula established him as the 'primus inter

27 *The butterfly's ball* was included in a compilation with Dorset's *Peacock "at Home"*. For a list of titles in each series see, 'Appendix C', Moon, pp. 153-4.

28 The catalogue is dated according to its contents; see Moon, p. 4.

29 Harris advertised the fourth edition of Priscilla Wakefield's *An introduction to botany* in local newspaper notices jointly sponsored by Darton and Harvey and other publishers, which presented it for 'Youth and Schools'. See, for example, *The Hull Packet*, 19 May 1807.

30 The imprints J. Harris and Son, and John Harris were also used during the period 1819-24, and exceptionally in 1826 and 1829. See Moon, p. xi. When John Harris retired in 1824 his son changed the list to 'Harris's 1s. 6d. Books Coloured'. *Ibid.*, p. 153.

pares of picture-book publishers'.³¹ The rhyme is attributed to Sarah Catherine Martin (1768-1826), daughter of Sir Henry Martin (1733-1794), 1st Baronet, who as a young girl was courted by Prince William (later William IV).³² She wrote *Mother Hubbard* in 1804, while staying as a guest at the country house of John Pollexfen Bastard, M.P., her future brother-in-law.³³ He apparently grew tired of her lively chatter interrupting his work and told her to 'run away and write one of your stupid little rhymes'.³⁴ The title 'Mother' was typically used to refer to old women of the lower classes, and a similar character is referred to in Edmund Spenser's satire *Prosopopœia, or, Mother Hubberd's tale* (1591).³⁵ Martin was probably familiar with the connotations of the character, as her drawings feature Mother Hubbard as a portly country dame.³⁶

The fact that *Mother Hubbard* begins with a six-line stanza with the rhyme pattern aabccb, then proceeds to four-line stanzas in which the rhyme follows an abab pattern, supports the idea that Martin took some familiar lines from an eighteenth-century rhyme from oral tradition, which she extended to fifteen verses.³⁷ A similar rhyme featuring children instead of a dog had been published in sheet-music form in 1797 as one of Dr Samuel Arnold's *Juvenile Amusements*:

31 Moon 559; Alderson & Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 142. Alderson describes *Mother Hubbard* as the prototype for the single rhyme book in Iona and Peter Opie and Brian Alderson, *Treasures of Childhood: Books, Toys, and Games from the Opie Collection*, 2nd edn rev. (London: Pavilion Books; NY: Arcade Publishing, 1989), p. 67. However, Darton dismisses *Mother Hubbard* as one of the 'host of lowlier levities' published at the turn of the century, executed with less literary and artistic finish than *The butterfly's Ball*. Darton, p. 202.

32 Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 364. Authorship was confirmed when the lost manuscript was rediscovered 1938 by Martin's great niece, Miss May of Stubbington. See notes in the facsimile of the 1804 manuscript, *Old Mother Hubbard and her dog* (Oxford: OUP, [1938]). Martin never married, but as a mature woman gained a reputation as 'an exemplary character in every worldly duty', with a 'well cultivated mind'. See Zebedee Moon, 'Old Mother Hubbard. The authoress (Sarah Catherine Martin) buried at Loughton', *Essex Review*, 25 (July 1916), 117-22. The testimonial is taken from the memoir of her brother, Sir Thomas Martin.

33 Sarah Martin's sister Judith married Bastard in 1809, following the death of his first wife Sarah in 1808. See Alastair W. Massie, 'Bastard, John Pollexfen (1756-1816)', *ODNB*.

34 Pollexfen's directive is cited in Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 364. Martin facetiously dedicates the earliest known copy to Bastard as his 'Humble servant [sic]'. The spelling was corrected in later editions.

35 Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 364. The *OED* lists usage in 1787 as: 'Prosopopœia, or Personification. Of this figure there are two kinds: one, when action and character are attributed to fictitious irrational, or even inanimate objects; the other, when a probable but fictitious speech is assigned to a real character'.

36 Martin's character is supposed to have been modelled on the housekeeper at Pollexfen's Kitley estate in Devon. See Cary S. Bliss, 'Introduction', in the *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her dog. A facsimile* (San Marino, CA: Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, [1962]).

37 Moon states that Martin wrote all but the first three verses; see Moon, p. 79. See also *ODNR*, p. 377. For the roots of the rhyme, see Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, pp. 364-5, also *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, ed. by Iona and Peter Opie (Oxford: OUP, 1997), pp. 376-7 (hereafter, *ODNR*).

Old Mother Hubbard went to the Cupboard
 to give the poor Children a bone
 And when she came there the Cupboard was bare,
 and so the poor Children had none.
 She went to the Bakers to buy them some bread,
 and when she return'd she found them all dead,
 She went to the Mans to bespeak them a Coffin,
 and when she return'd she found them all laughing.³⁸

This may be the same version to which Jackson refers when she notes an inexpensive printed version of *Mother Hubbard* (c. 1770-1790) distributed by John Evans, a publisher of farthing chapbooks and song sheets.³⁹ Martin's *Mother Hubbard* thus brought a traditional oral rhyme into the children's nursery canon.

It has been suggested that the additional verses for *Mother Hubbard* were styled in the manner of *Old Dame Trot and her comical cat*, first published by T. Evans in 1803, as the rhyme has a similar metre and narrative structure.⁴⁰ As in the original rhyme, Martin has Mother Hubbard go to her cupboard and discover that she has no bone for the dog. She establishes the idea of the joke on the nursery dame's first trip, when the dame returns from buying a coffin for the dead dog, only to find that 'The dog was laughing' (v. 3) (Fig. 3.1).⁴¹ In Martin's new verses Mother Hubbard goes out on a succession of similar shopping trips to fetch the dog various items; she visits the butchers, the alehouse, the fruiterer's, the tailor's, the hatter's, the barber's, the seamstress, and the hosier, each time returning to find the dog performing a comical turn (Fig. 3.2). Amusing illustrations, engraved on copperplate after Martin's original sketches, tell the story in pictures for those

38 ODNR, p. 377.

39 Mary V. Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic*, p. 199. Jackson offers no further details of the publication.

40 ODNR, p. 379. The first dated edition of *Old Dame Trot and her comical cat* was published in 1807, under the imprint of W. & T. Darton; however, two undated editions from an earlier imprint are provisionally dated 1804-6, and 1805-6, so may have been published before *Mother Hubbard*. See Lawrence Darton, *The Dartons: An Annotated Check-List of Children's Books Issued by Two Publishing Houses 1787-1876* (BL; Newcastle, DE, Oak Knoll Press, 2004), pp. 374-5, H320. Alderson and Oyens discuss the question in *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 150. The character of Dame Trot had been in oral circulation at least a hundred years earlier. See Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 140.

41 In the verses published in sheet-music form the joke is set up in the same way. Similarly, in *Old Dame Trot and her comical cat* the old woman buys a coffin, but when she gets back the cat sits up and mews. See ODNR, pp. 377-9.



Figs. 3.1-3.2 *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* (J. Harris, 1805), second opening. © British Library Board C.194.a.1127



Fig. 3.3 *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* (J. Harris, 1805 [dated for 1806]), cover (11.6 x 9.5 cm). © British Library Board C.194.a.1127

children not yet able to read for themselves. Their prominent positioning on the page, which has just four or six lines of verse, indicates that Harris designed the book as a picture-reader.

It is thought that the rhyme became popular partly because it was seen as a witty political squib; Mother Hubbard is the servant who must satisfy every whim of her foppish master the dog.⁴² However, Martin's skill lies in her ability to satisfy a child as well as an adult audience. The extended joke is explained to children by showing the dog, dressed in wig, tails and hose, flamboyantly thanking the dame: 'The Dame made a courtesy, / The Dog made a bow; / The Dame said, Your servant, / The Dog said, Bow-wow' (v. 14). Martin's carnivalesque rhyme turns the world topsy-turvy with its anthropomorphised dog, but the humour indicates to the reader that this is not a story to be taken seriously; it is simply a nonsense rhyme about a dog that can sing and dance, read and write.

Harris clearly viewed *Mother Hubbard* as a speculative project, because he was unprepared for its instant popularity, which presented him with his first exercise in commercial logistics. He had to respond very quickly with reprints to keep up with demand. Very few copies of the first edition have survived, and each appears in a slightly different state, indicating the amendments that were made to the plates with each printing.⁴³ Moon lists three different states of the 1805 first edition issued in pink wrappers (first two printings), then buff wrappers (Fig. 3.3). However, since Moon compiled her checklist, an additional near-perfect impression of the first state has been discovered by Alderson and Oyens in the Pierpoint Morgan Library collection; it is printed on eighteenth-century laid paper, has finely hand-coloured copperplate illustrations and yellow stiff covers, inscribed with the price 1s. 6d. (a detail that Moon does not note).⁴⁴ The second edition, dated May 1806, was issued in blue wrappers, indicating that Harris had

42 ODNr, p. 377.

43 Moon cites a note in the *Bodleian Quarterly Record*, for Winter 1936-7, recording 'three distinct states of the plates', which are all dated 1 June 1805. The earliest represents the copy given by Martin to John Pollexfen Bastard; in the second, the worn plates have been touched up; in the third state changes have been made to the 'Hosiers' and 'Bakers' plates. Martin's initials on the title-page and the 'Undertakers' plate do not correspond (appearing as S. M. C., then changed to S. C. M.). See Moon pp. 82-3.

44 Alderson and Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 145, no. 187.

to switch colours when paper supplies ran out.⁴⁵ Alderson and Oyens suggest that the book was engraved and etched (picture and text) on one side of the sheet ‘probably from a single large copperplate’.⁴⁶ The folding of the sheet gave Harris the almost square-shaped book (11.6 x 9.5cm) that became associated with his publishing house.⁴⁷

Following the spectacular success of Martin’s comic rhyme, Harris was quick to anticipate demand for a ‘continuation’ of Mother Hubbard’s adventures, which the author hurriedly produced for publication later the same year (Figs. 3.4-3.6).⁴⁸ Available in an exciting hand-coloured edition, it proved another instant success. In an advertisement that appears on the lower cover of the third title in the series, published in March 1806 as the ‘sequel’, Harris claims that the first and second parts of ‘this much admired performance’ sold ten thousand copies in six months.⁴⁹ This does not seem an exaggeration as Harris claimed the first *Mother Hubbard* book had reached its 24th edition by 1807. The fact that the poet John Wolcot (‘Peter Pindar’) protested at the way that the public doted on the story, offers further evidence of the book’s overwhelming popularity.⁵⁰ The ‘continuation’ of *Mother Hubbard* (the second title by Martin) was only marginally less successful, reaching its 12th edition by 1807; however, the ‘sequel’ (‘written by another hand’), did not last beyond the second edition of 1807, perhaps because it lacked the vigour of Martin’s witty verse. Nevertheless, despite the relative failure of the ‘sequel’, Harris had created his first mini-series of nursery readers and succeeded in starting a craze.

45 Iona and Peter Opie, *Three Centuries of Nursery Rhymes and Poetry for Children* (Oxford and London: OUP, 1977), 508, p. 35. The British Library edition of *Mother Hubbard* 1805 has buff wrappers dated 1806, as listed in Moon 559 (1C).

46 Alderson and Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, pp. 145, no. 187.

47 For the printing and folding of sheets, see Robin Alston, *Bibliography and the History of Books* (BL, 1996), p. 20, plate 27.

48 *A continuation of the comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard, and her dog. By S. C. M.* (Printed for John Harris, 1805). Moon 561.

49 *A sequel to the comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard, and her dog, by another hand* (J. Harris and Windsor: C. Knight, 1807). The printed dedication is to ‘P. A.’ by ‘W. F.’, but the author has not been identified. Moon says no copy of the first edition (published 1 March) has been seen in the original covers, but two copies of the 2nd edition have been recorded as being bound into the covers of *A sequel to...*, which carries the advertisement stating that ten thousand copies of the first and second parts had been sold. See Moon 562.

50 ODNr, p. 377.



Figs. 3.4-3.5 *A continuation of the comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* (J. Harris, 1806), first opening. © British Library Board 194.a.1128



Fig. 3.6 *A continuation of the comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard* (J. Harris, 1806), cover. © British Library Board 194.a.1128



Fig. 3.7 *Whimsical incidents* (J. Harris, 1806), lower cover advertisement. NAL 861. AA.4309 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

To capitalise on the popularity of *Mother Hubbard* Harris issued a succession of similar titles, such as *Whimsical incidents, or, The power of music: a poetic tale by a near relation of Old Mother Hubbard* (issued in 1805 and again in 1806), advertising himself as the publisher of *Mother Hubbard* on the lower cover, to connect it as part of the series (Fig. 3.7).⁵¹ In the same year he published *The talking bird: or Dame Trudge and her parrot* as a Cabinet title, which ran to six editions by 1808.⁵² In 1806 Harris also attacked his rival Darton head-on by publishing a trilogy of stories about Old Dame Trot and her cat, which sparked a small publishing war.⁵³ The Darton firm quickly retaliated by producing a version of *Mother Hubbard*, and its 'continuation' in the same year, which were priced to match Harris's booklets at 1s. plain and 1s. 6d. hand-coloured.⁵⁴ Harris seems to have been carried away with the success of this new genre of publishing, because he brought out a rather salacious book called *Pug's visit, or the Disasters of Mr. Punch* (1806), featuring a Mother Hubbard figure that elopes with a monkey dressed up in her husband's clothes.⁵⁵ Given the bawdy adult themes, it is surprising that this title was also included in the Cabinet of Amusement; as Moon notes, its coarse humour would not be considered suitable for the nursery today.⁵⁶

Harris also added *The history of Mother Twaddle, and the marvellous achievements of her son Jack*, by B. A. T. (1807), a Jack and the beanstalk story, to the Cabinet series.⁵⁷ Such was the popularity of Harris's amusing Mother Hubbard genre that he included a leather-bound volume of the books in an extravagant four-part boxed set of his key titles, *The poetic garland, or library of knowledge and mirth* (1807),

51 *Whimsical incidents, or, The power of music: a poetic tale by a near relation of Old Mother Hubbard* (J. Harris, 1806). Moon 976.

52 *The talking bird: or Dame Trudge and her parrot* (Printed for J. Harris, 1806). For editions see Moon 851.

53 *Dame Trot and her cat* (John Harris, 1806). Moon also lists a 'new and improved' edition of Dame Trot, *The first part of Dame Trot, and her comical cat* (Printed for J. Harris, 1806). Moon says both these titles carry a 1st plate dated 1 October, therefore the third title in the series, dated 10 March 1806, appears to have been published first: *A continuation of the adventures of Old Dame Trot, and her comical cat* (John Harris; Windsor: C. Knight, 1806). Moon 181-3.

54 No copies exist, but an advertisement for *The comical adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her wonderful dog* and a continuation of the same work, appeared in *The history of a goldfinch* (W. and T. D. Darton, 1806). See L. Darton, *The Dartons*, p. 546, H1108-9 and p. 458, H705(1).

55 *Pug's visits, or The disasters of Mr. Punch* (J. Harris, 1806). Moon 691.

56 Moon 691.

57 B. A. T., *The history of Mother Twaddle, and the marvellous achievements of her son Jack* (J. Harris, 1807). Moon 843.

which sold for £1. 11s. 6d. plain, or £2. 6s. coloured.⁵⁸ This demonstrates that Harris recognised the opportunity to boost sales by marketing the books in different forms, and different series. Other publishers jumped on the *Mother Hubbard* bandwagon, pirating their own editions; several chapbook versions were issued, most notably the editions produced by J. Kendrew of York, who is thought to have issued his miniature pamphlet around 1820.⁵⁹ Other pirated versions were circulated by J. G. Rusher of Banbury, whose undated chapbook edition is thought to have been issued around 1830, and Oliver & Boyd in Edinburgh, who issued another undated title, *The droll adventures of old Mother Hubbard, and her wonderful dog*.⁶⁰

Part of the success of Harris's first mini-series can be attributed to its high quality and neat design. The compact size and flexible card binding, made the books suitable for nursery use. The good quality of the paper, selected to allow effective printing of the copperplate engravings, made the little booklets appear more elegant than their covers suggested, and their particular charm may have been that they looked like upmarket versions of chapbooks.⁶¹ *Mother Hubbard* thus drew on the common culture of traditional rhyme, while signalling its legitimate place in the nursery with superior production and a cover price that distinguished it from common chapbooks, which sold for as little as a halfpenny. Harris had effectively gentrified the chapbook for use in middle-class homes.

Mrs Trimmer grudgingly gave her approval for *Mother Hubbard* in a *Guardian of Education* review. Recalling her own enjoyment of the tale as a child (thus proving

58 *The poetic garland, or library of knowledge and mirth*, 4 vols (John Harris, [ca. 1807]). The first volume contained eight items, including the three *Mother Hubbard* titles, two *Dame Trot* titles, *Whimsical incidents*, *Mother Twaddle*, and *Pug's visits*. Harris removed *Pug's visits* from the 1809 edition of *Poetic garland*. Moon 666 (p. 95 and additional entry p. 185). This suggests its vulgar humour did not meet with public approval.

59 *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her dog. Part I* (York: Printed by James Kendrew, 1820?). Many examples of this book and its sequel, *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard and her dog, Part II* (York: J. Kendrew, [182-?]), have survived; see various entries in *Small Books for the Common Man: A Descriptive Bibliography*, ed. John Meriton with Carlo Dumontet (BL; New Castle, DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2010).

60 *Old Mother Hubbard and her dog* (Banbury: Printed by J. G. Rusher, [1830]). *The droll adventures of Old Mother Hubbard, and her wonderful dog* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, n.d.). The style and text of the latter version is similar to Harris's Second Cabinet edition, suggesting that it was produced after 1819.

61 Chapbooks – cheap, paper-covered books sold by itinerant pedlars, known as chapmen – were primarily intended for consumption by adults, but some fairy tales and romances published in this form were appropriated for children's reading. O'Malley discusses the 'hybridization of plebeian chapbook elements and middle-class pedagogy' in what he identifies as 'transitional' children's books, such as *A little pretty pocket-book* (1744), published by John Newbery. See Chapter One in *The Making of the Modern Child*, 17-38 (p. 21).

the circulation of the earlier rhyme), she advised:

This little book, the poetry of which is of ancient date, comes forth in this *edition* as we must call it, with uncommon attraction ... We can recollect, at this distance of time, that in our infant days the Story of this renowned woman, though full of inconsistencies we confess, afforded us much entertainment.⁶²

Harris had succeeded in amusing even the most die hard rationalists, and with Trimmer's blessing middle-class parents could buy the book with impunity.

Harris revamped *Mother Hubbard* for his Second Cabinet series (see below), and new editions of the rhyme continued to be produced throughout the nineteenth century in both cheap and upmarket editions, including a playbook version (with altered text) in which Mother Hubbard and her dog 'Pompey' can be made to move by pulling the tags.⁶³ Henry Cole recognised the importance of *Mother Hubbard*'s heritage in his collection of traditional nursery rhymes published in the 1840s (see Chapter Four). Walter Crane's 1874 toy book version of *Mother Hubbard* similarly demonstrates its significance for Victorian children (see Chapter Five). The popular rhyme earned a place in the nursery canon, appearing in many anthologies of nursery verse and newly interpreted picture books right up to the twenty-first century.⁶⁴ Thus Harris's publication of *Mother Hubbard* helped establish the rhyme as a perennial nursery favourite.

The butterfly's ball

The success of the *Mother Hubbard* titles showed that there was exceptional demand for illustrated rhyme books that placed amusement above instruction. With the market primed, Harris began to seek out more novelty titles and soon found a children's poem that became a publishing phenomenon. *The butterfly's*

62 *The Guardian of Education*, 4 (September 1805), pp. 413-4.

63 *A new story about Mother Hubbard and her dog. Moveable edition* (Ward & Lock, [1861]). A new edition of *Mother Hubbard* is thought to have been published almost every year from 1805; see ODNB, pp. 379-80.

64 See, for example, *The Faber Book of Nursery Verse*, ed. Barbara Ireson (Faber and Faber, 1958; repr. 1983) and *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse*, ed. Iona and Peter Opie (OUP, 1973; repr. 1975). Tracey Moroney, *A Classic Treasury of Nursery Songs & Rhymes* (Rowville, VIC: Five Mile Press, 2002; repr. 2007), and Alison Green, *Mother Goose's Nursery Rhymes* (Macmillan Children's, 2006). The latest interpretation of Martin's original verse listed by the British Library is Lara Jones, *Old Mother Hubbard: touch and count playbook* (Ladybird, 2005).

ball, published on 1 January 1807, was immediately popular, and provided Harris with the beginnings of his next mini-series. The collector Elisabeth Ball likens its publication to ‘a breath of fresh air in a stuffy room’.⁶⁵ The dramatic impact of the publication of *The butterfly’s ball* demonstrates its importance in the development of the children’s nursery market.

Like *Mother Hubbard*, William Roscoe’s poem was issued in chapbook form, first in yellow stiff paper wrappers (12.6 x 9.2 cm) printed with the title and attractive vignettes of a butterfly and a grasshopper, and then in blue wrappers from the sixth edition of 1807 (Fig. 3.8).⁶⁶ Its high-quality copperplate engravings, after William Mulready (1786-1863), were novel and artistic, with the opening picture and verse creating an attractive frontispiece (Fig. 3.10). The speed with which Harris was able to arrange reprints and develop a successful series shows his remarkable skill in identifying a commercial opportunity. As with the success of *Mother Hubbard* it sparked a craze for similar titles – ‘the papillonades’, as Jackson dubs the genre.⁶⁷ Harris issued a further twenty-four titles (some in association with other firms) and many publishers imitated the format, producing a dozen more titles (see Appendix One). The most notable of the imitations published by Harris is *The peacock “at home”*; *a sequel to The butterfly’s ball*, which appeared in the same year as Roscoe’s poem and proved equally popular and influential (Fig. 3.9).⁶⁸

Many papillonades, even those issued by other publishers, announced themselves as sequels to one or other of the titles. (Figs. 3.11-3.14). In Roscoe’s hometown Liverpool, a chapbook publisher quickly pirated a version of *The butterfly’s ball* to cash in on local interest.⁶⁹ *The butterfly’s ball* pocket-handkerchiefs, card games, and jig-saw puzzles were manufactured to satisfy the frenzy of interest.⁷⁰ However, despite all this commercial furore, the fact that the poem was so readily

65 Elisabeth Ball, ‘The Child Discovers its World Through Books of Travel’, in *For Your Amusement and Instruction* (Bloomington, IN: The Lilly Library, 1987), 8-12, (p. 9).

66 For editions see Moon 725.

67 For the ‘papillonades’ see Jackson, *Engines of Instruction, Mischief and Magic*, pp. 208-13.

68 [Catherine Dorset], *The peacock “at home.”; a sequel to The butterfly’s ball* (Printed for J. Harris, 1807). Moon 215.

69 *The butterfly’s ball and grasshopper’s feast* (Liverpool: G. Thompson, [c. 1808]). See George Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool* (Batsford, 1953), plate 74, p. 118.

70 See Muir, *English Children’s Books*, p. 102.



Fig. 3.8 *The butterfly's ball* (J. Harris, 1807), cover (12.6 x 9.2 cm). NAL 60.Z.497 (a). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.9 *The peacock "At home"* (J. Harris, 1807), cover. NAL 60.Z.497 (e). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.10 *The butterfly's ball* (J. Harris, 1807), frontispiece and title page. NAL 60.Z.497 (a). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

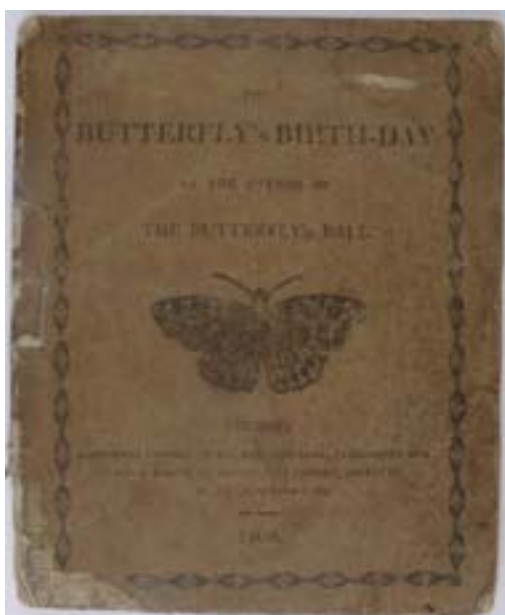
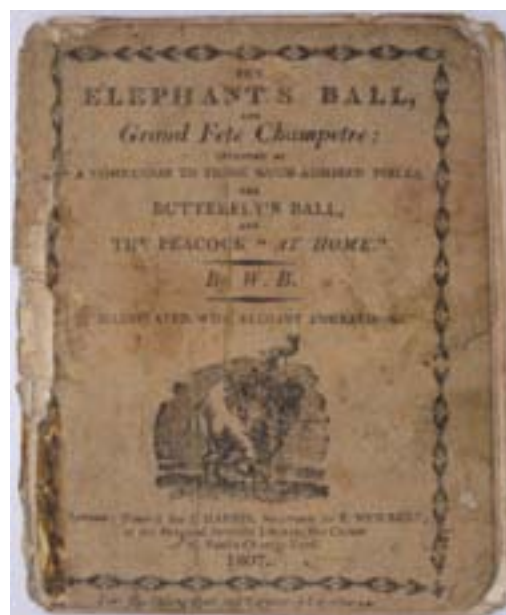


Fig. 3.11 *The butterfly's birthday* (Longman, Hurst, Rees, and J. Harris, 1809), cover. NAL 60.Z.497 (c) (LB). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.12 *The butterfly's funeral* (John Wallis, 1808), cover. NAL 861.AA.4308 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs. 3.13-3.14 *The elephant's ball* (J. Harris, 1807), lower cover advertisement and front cover. NAL 861.AA.4310 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

adopted as part of the nursery canon – it was reissued and reinterpreted by many other publishers throughout the nineteenth century, as well as appearing in many children’s anthologies – suggests that *The butterfly’s ball* had at least some literary merit, as well as an enduring appeal for children. It was not simply a one-minute wonder, as the majority of the papillonades proved to be.

The announcement on the cover of *The butterfly’s ball* that it was ‘by Mr. Roscoe’, particularly at a time when children’s writers tended to publish anonymously, indicates that Harris intended to capitalise on the author’s reputation as an author of erudite literature, to underline the suitability of the book for a middle-class market.⁷¹ William Roscoe (1753-1831) was a retired lawyer, banker, and father of ten children, who had gained an international reputation as a writer and historian with *The Life of Lorenzo de’ Medici* (1796), and its sequel, *The Life of Pope Leo X, Son of Lorenzo de’ Medici* (1805).⁷² He was a self-made man of considerable standing in Liverpool, where he had been actively involved in social and cultural affairs (he helped to establish botanical gardens, a library, as well as various arts societies), and had recently been elected as the local (Whig) MP.⁷³ The author’s friendship with Dr John Aikin (1747-1822) and his sister Anna Laetitia Barbauld shows that he moved in literary circles associated with children’s books and education, which would have encouraged a good reception of his work.⁷⁴

Public interest in *The butterfly’s ball* had already been generated through publication of the poem in the *Gentleman’s Magazine* only two months previously, in November 1806.⁷⁵ The poem had also appeared in a slightly different form in the *Lady’s*

71 Writing for a juvenile audience did not have the same status as writing for adults, perhaps because it was so strongly associated with women authors and writers commonly assumed a pen name; Fenn’s ‘Mrs Teachwell’ and ‘Mrs Lovechild’ pseudonyms afforded her ladylike anonymity, although her contemporary Mrs Trimmer was confident in using her own name. See also Chapter Two (p. 60, f/n 31).

72 Roscoe was a self-taught historian whose interest in Italian culture had been aroused by the artist and writer Henry Fuseli (1741-1825). See Donald A. Macnaughton, ‘Roscoe, William (1753-1831)’, *ODNB*.

73 Roscoe served only briefly as an MP (1806-1807). See Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool*, p. 115. Roscoe’s association with the Unitarian chapel in Liverpool and the Warrington dissenters’ academy shaped his political views on Reform, slavery, and education of the poor. See Macnaughton, ‘William Roscoe’, *ODNB*.

74 For correspondence indicating Roscoe’s acquaintance with Aikin, Barbauld, Aikin’s daughter Lucy Aikin (1781-1864) and Robert Southey (1774-1843), see Henry Roscoe, *The Life of William Roscoe, by Henry Roscoe*, 2 vols (London: Printed for T. Cadell; Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1833), pp. 292-3.

75 *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 76 (November, 1806), p. 1052.

Monthly Museum published earlier in November; the magazine reported that the manuscript poem had been set as a glee by the musician [Sir] George Smart (1776-1867), by order of King George III and Queen Charlotte, and performed by three of their daughters (the princesses Elizabeth, Augusta and Mary) at a dinner for the Annual Musical Fund.⁷⁶ Roscoe's poem thus received a royal endorsement. Harris shrewdly produced *The butterfly's ball* to cater for a similarly cultured audience, commissioning high quality illustrations in the Bewick manner by the talented, but as yet unknown, young artist William Mulready (1786-1863), which transformed the simple poem into a highly appealing novelty book.⁷⁷ It was sold with hand-coloured illustrations at eighteen pence, or at one-shilling plain for children to colour in. A note on the cover explained that Roscoe had written it 'for the Use of his Children', thus suggesting its educational value in the nursery.⁷⁸ It seems likely that Harris agreed publication of *The butterfly's ball* with Roscoe in advance of its appearance in the journals, because it would have been difficult to commission engraved pictures and text within such a short time (less than two months).⁷⁹ It is possible that he had come across the poem in manuscript form, as it had been widely circulated by the author.⁸⁰ However, it seems more likely that Harris's business connection with the *Gentleman's Magazine* enabled him to secure the manuscript ahead of publication.⁸¹

As in *Mother Hubbard*, the pictures and lines of verse are arranged in tandem on the page to make it suitable as a first reader. However, *The butterfly's ball* incorporates a number of features that mark it out as a much more sophisticated style of nursery reading. The verse is written in rhyming couplets that have the singsong melody of

76 *The Lady's Monthly Museum: or, Polite Repository of Amusement and Instruction*, [ed.] by a Society of Ladies, July-December 1806 (November), 193-5. For details of the King's request to George Smart (knighted 1811), see Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool*, p. 114, also Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 91.

77 Mulready was at this time employed as a book illustrator for William Godwin's Juvenile Library, where he worked alongside George Cruikshank (1792-1878), developing his style in the tradition of Thomas Bewick (1733-1828). His reputation as a painter developed later. See Marcia Pointon, 'Mulready, William (1786-1863)', *ODNB*.

78 The explanatory note had been published with the poem in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.

79 See also Muir, *English Children's Books*, pp. 100-1.

80 See Sir Alfred Shennan, 'Introduction', in Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool*, p. xxxii.

81 The title page for the *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 71, January-June 1801 shows: 'Printed by J. Nichols & Son and sold by J. Harris. Successor to Mrs. Newbery'. Harris had shares in the journal; see Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 91. The obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 26 (December 1846), p. 664 notes: 'It must not be forgotten that Mr. Harris was long one of the proprietors and publisher of the Gentleman's Magazine'.

a traditional nursery song, but with echoes of classical poetry. Most significantly, it is a work of pure imagination, celebrating the wonders of the natural world without the moral precepts that accompanied traditional animal fables and rationalist natural history works. In the opening lines, printed in the frontispiece, readers are invited to join ‘the Revels’ of the natural world, as the ‘Children of Earth’ (the animals) and ‘Tenants of Air’ (the insects) gather for ‘an Evening’s Amusement’, like so many guests at a grand occasion:

Come take up your Hats, and away let us haste
To the Butterfly’s Ball, and the Grasshopper’s feast
The Trumpeter, Gad-fly, has summon’d the Crew,
And the Revels are now only waiting for you.

Roscoe is thought to have written *The butterfly’s ball* to placate his young son’s disappointment at not being able to accompany him to a dinner.⁸² However, although the poem was designed to mimic an adult event, the absence of any watchful grownups in the party scene demonstrates the author’s belief that children need to be allowed the freedom to create their own world through play. Fenn’s rational dame – the mother who would direct her children’s appreciation of the countryside, rather than let them discover it for themselves – has been kept at home, and the children are allowed to roam as free spirits. Roscoe employs the narrative devices typically used in children’s fantasy, and *The butterfly’s ball* prefigures Lewis Carroll’s use of an imaginary world of animals by some fifty years: the children pass through a door to enter a magical world; there is no parental supervision of their extraordinary adventure; they return home safely at the end of the day. As O’Malley observes, by the early nineteenth century ‘a safe place for fantasy was emerging within a middle-class ideology and pedagogy’; he suggests that books such as *The butterfly’s ball* were approved because they contained none of the ‘ribald, subversive humour’, or ‘magical assistance’, which was typical of chapbook literature.⁸³

82 See ‘Brian Alderson, our Children’s Books Editor, Describes How the First “Butterfly’s Ball” was Published’, *The Times*, 26 September 1973, p. 15. Opinions differ as to the addressee of the poem. For Robert Roscoe see Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool*, p. 114; Darton, p. 199. An early manuscript appears to be inscribed by Roscoe to his fifth son Thomas Roscoe (1791-1871). For reproductions of the manuscript see Gillian Avery and Margaret Kinsall, ‘Morality and Levity’, in *Children’s Literature, an Illustrated History*, ed. Hunt, 46-76, p. 68 (69 n.); Opie and Alderson, *The Treasures of Childhood*, p. 30.

83 Andrew O’Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child*, pp. 134-5.

Roscoe had dabbled with writing poetry before. Although he had received little formal education (he left school at the age of twelve) his mother had encouraged his interest in poetry from a very early age, and in his youth he had published poetry for adults, including some amatory lyrics and political poems that had received favourable notice.⁸⁴ Roscoe was inspired by the works of Shenstone and Goldsmith, and there are echoes of this influence in his adoption of a mock-epic style and rather archaic language in *The butterfly's ball*; for example, 'The viands were various to each of their taste. / And the Bee brought the honey to sweeten the feast.'⁸⁵ Roscoe's love of the countryside, which developed while working on his father's market garden, is reflected in his observations of nature: the spider's 'Dexterity' (l. 32); the 'majestic' step of the snail (l. 43); and the bee's honey brought to 'crown the Repast' (l. 26). He vividly invokes a pastoral scene with lines such as 'the smooth-shaven grass' and 'Beneath a broad Oak' (lines 5-6).⁸⁶ Coleridge praised *The butterfly's ball*, commenting that 'though published merely as a child's book, [it] has the true spirit of faëry poesy, and reminds one of the best things in Herrick'.⁸⁷ Such was its influence that Ann Taylor (1782-1866), already an accomplished children's poet in her own right, created *The wedding among the flowers* (1808) in imitation.⁸⁸ Lewis Carroll may have been parodying the anapaestic rhythm of the poem when he wrote: "O Looking-Glass creatures", quoth Alice, "draw near!"⁸⁹ Harris's publication of *The butterfly's ball* thus introduced a new style of poetry to the nursery market, and was highly influential.

Mulready's drawings for *The butterfly's ball* pick up the fantasy element, and the

84 For his mother's encouragement, see Donald A. Macnaughton, *Roscoe of Liverpool* (Birkenhead: Countyvise, 1996), p. 3. For examples of Roscoe's poetry see Henry Clark, *William Roscoe and his Life* (Liverpool: H. Young, 1883), p. 9. See also Graham Murphy, *William Roscoe: His Early Ideals and Influence* ([Liverpool: G. Murphy, c. 1981]), p. 15.

85 Of Shenstone, Roscoe remarked: 'admiring, I began to imitate from him'. See Macnaughton, *Roscoe of Liverpool*, p. 6. Roscoe addressed the poet in a poem written when he was eighteen: 'O Shenstone, favourite of the Nine'; cited in *William Roscoe 1753-1831: The Life of Lorenzo de' Medici*, ed. William Hazlitt (David. Bogue, 1846), p. x.

86 Roscoe left school at 12 having received only a 'flimsy' education; while working on the land, he devoted his leisure time to reading. See Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool*, pp. 5-6.

87 Editorial note (presumed to be by Samuel Taylor Coleridge), in Hartley Coleridge, *Lives of the Northern Worthies*, 3 vols (Edward Moxon, 1852), III, 'William Roscoe', 1-116 (p. 116). Chandler suggests that had Roscoe come under the influence of Wordsworth rather than Shenstone and Goldsmith, he might have become a great poet. Chandler, *William Roscoe of Liverpool*, p. 114.

88 Darton, pp. 201-2.

89 Darton, p. 199.

artist is ahead of his time in attempting to illustrate the child's imagination at work. The opening illustration (used as a frontispiece) shows a young boy on the threshold of a door gesturing to his companions to venture outdoors into the world of nature, and his open stance suggests that he is simultaneously inviting readers to join the party and find out what fun lies ahead (Fig. 3.10, p. 122). In the second illustration the boy is shown as the 'trumpeter' riding on the back of the gadfly as he heralds the guests (Fig. 3.15). By the third frame the game of imagination is well under way; the children are shown fully absorbed at the feast, dressed as animals and insects (Fig. 3.15). Mulready's illustrations thus successfully transport the child from the real world into the realms of the imagination created by Roscoe. The anthropomorphism is incomplete as the artist shows the humans adopting animal forms, rather than suggesting the animals as people; nevertheless, it is possible to trace a line of development from *The butterfly's ball* through to *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and *The tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901) showing its influence on later artists.

The illustrations facilitate a young child's understanding of Roscoe's text, particularly when the vocabulary becomes more challenging. This is demonstrated in the drawing of the 'Emmet' astride the beetle's back, which shows a child dressed as an insect knight carrying a shield emblazoned with a picture of an ant, thus explaining the insect name (fourth frame). The illustration does not diminish the effect of Roscoe's wonderful imagery of the beetle 'so blind and so black', which would have been difficult for an illustrator to represent visually. Illustration and text are thus shown working as complementary agents in the creation of narrative. Recognising Mulready's talent, Harris commissioned the artist to illustrate a further six papillonades; he had discovered a new artist.

To appreciate the proper effect of Mulready's illustrations for *The butterfly's ball* fully it is necessary to examine them 'plain', as the crude hand painting found in some examples of the coloured versions obscures the finer detail. An example of an early uncoloured edition (held at the British Library) shows very clearly the delicate lines of the wings, and ringed tail of the dragonfly seated at the feast (third frame), but in the



Fig. 3.15 *The butterfly's ball* (J. Harris, 1807), first opening. NAL 60.Z.497 (a). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs. 3.16-3.17 *The butterfly's ball* (J. Harris, 1807), first opening. © British Library Board C.40.a.57.(1.)

coloured version (held in the NAL at the V&A) these features are almost obliterated by the green paint indelicately applied as a solid wash (Figs. 3.15-3.17).⁹⁰ The novelist Charlotte Yonge (1823-1901) later commented on the way that the colouring detracted from Mulready's fine work:

I have a Peacock at Home with the badly painted pictures you describe /1807\, but the drawings were Mulready's and are excellent [...] Griffiths and Farrar republished it without the paint, and one sees how good they are.⁹¹

By the time that Yonge made these comments, printed colour illustrations were the norm; however, the unskilled application of paint may not have been a cause for concern when *The butterfly's ball* was first published as the coloured illustrations were an exciting novelty that made Harris's books very appealing.

Harris completely changed the illustrations and modified the poem in a new edition of *The butterfly's ball* issued 1808, listed by Moon as the seventh.⁹² The new edition had fewer illustrations (reduced from fourteen to seven) with the text printed on separate pages, rather than being etched onto the plate above the illustrations, which would have significantly reduced production costs. The children only appear in the first and last drawings as they set off for the animal kingdom and then return home, and the animals are depicted realistically, giving the book a more educational feel than the 1807 edition (Figs. 3.18-3.19). It seems likely that Harris changed the format of *The butterfly's ball* to make it consistent with the other 'papillonades' he was hastily issuing, thus creating a recognisable series.

The most successful of the many *The butterfly's ball* imitations was its first

90 The copies compared are of William Roscoe, *The butterfly's ball* (Printed for J. Harris, 1807); plain: BL C.40.a.57.(1.), which is bound into a later untitled compendium; coloured: V&A NAL 60.Z.497 (a).

91 Charlotte Yonge, letter to Miss E. M. Walker 6 January 1900, West Sussex County Record Office, Add. MSS 16,944/6. Yonge misspells 'Farran'. I am grateful to Charlotte Mitchell for alerting me to this document.

92 Moon notes that the engravings after Mulready's original illustrations were used for the first six editions issued in 1807 (all vary in some respect); the 1808 edition carried the new illustration and altered text. Moon 725 (7). The new poem is personalised, with the leading child named as 'Robert'; it has additional verses and minor changes to the vocabulary. The version had appeared in an alternative edition of Roscoe's poem published in William Roscoe and Mr. Smith, *The butterfly's ball, and the grasshopper's feast. By Mr. Roscoe. To which is added, an original poem, entitled A winter's day. By Mr. Smith, of Stand* (1807; Printed for J. Harris, 1808). Moon 726.



Fig. 3.18 *The butterfly's ball* (J. Harris, 1807), third opening. NAL 60.Z.497 (a). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

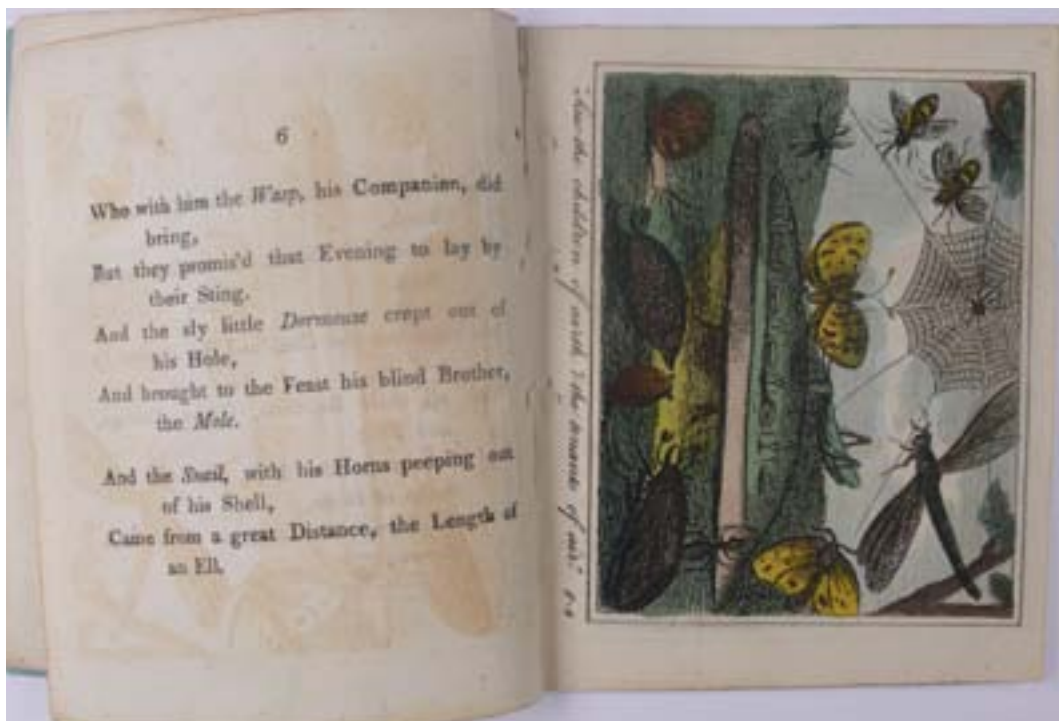


Fig. 3.19 *The butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast, and A winter's day* (J. Harris, 1808), pp. 6-7. NAL 60.Z.497 (b). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

companion, *The peacock “at home”*. The anonymous author, ‘a Lady’, was later revealed to be Catherine Ann Dorset (née Turner, 1750?-1816?).⁹³ Dorset was the younger sister of the successful poet and novelist Charlotte Smith (1749-1806) who may have encouraged her to write; eleven of Dorset’s poems had already been published anonymously in Smith’s book for children, *Conversations introducing poetry* (1804).⁹⁴ Dorset adopts a similar mock-epic style to Roscoe in her light-hearted social satire, which articulates the peacock’s indignation at having been excluded from the butterfly’s ball: ‘The Quadrupeds listen’d with sullen displeasure, / But the Tenants of Air were enrag’d beyond measure’ (p. 4). Dorset names more than fifty native and exotic birds that the peacock invites to his home – such as the turtle-dove, the Wheat-ear, and Razor-bill – and the capitalisation of the various species in the text (as well as a few explanatory footnotes), suggests an attempt to highlight the poem’s educational value. It is possible that Dorset’s ornithological theme was inspired by her sister’s book on birds, which may also have provided a source of information.⁹⁵ The *British Critic* reviewer, who admired the author’s ‘playful wit’, appreciated the author’s knowledge of natural history, and the *Monthly Review* similarly judged the poem to have been ‘deservedly applauded’.⁹⁶

Mulready’s illustrations for *The peacock “at home”* provide visual clues for the child reader, who might struggle with Dorset’s grandiloquent verse. The frontispiece is a finely engraved, naturalistic drawing of the peacock, typical of a natural history illustration (Fig. 3.20).⁹⁷ However, in other pictures the artist underlines the humour attached to the satire, and fully anthropomorphises Dorset’s talking birds. For example, the carnivalesque picture entitled ““The Razorbill carv’d for the famishing group”” (p. 14), in which Mulready playfully inverts expectations

93 Dorset was revealed as the author in the title of *The peacock at home: and other poems. By Mrs Dorset* (Printed for John Murray; J. Harris; Edinburgh: Manners and Miller, 1809). Moon 216.

94 Dorset and Smith’s father, Nicholas Turner (b. c. 1721, d. before 1776), a wealthy and cultured member of the gentry, wrote poetry and encouraged his daughters’ writing. Dorset took up writing as an occupation after being widowed in 1805. For biographical details see *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era: An Anthology*, ed. Paula R. Feldman (Baltimore, MD and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 226-7. See also Jennett Humphreys, rev. Katherine Turner, ‘Dorset, Catherine Ann (bap. 1753, d. in or after 1816)’, *ODNB*.

95 Charlotte Smith, *A natural history of birds: intended chiefly for young persons* (Printed for J. Johnson, 1807).

96 *British Critic*, 30 (November 1807), pp. 554-6; *Monthly Review*, 54 (December 1807), pp. 446-7; both journals cited in *British Women Poets of the Romantic Era*, ed. Feldman, p. 227.

97 The frontispiece illustration is so different in style that it may not be attributable to Mulready.

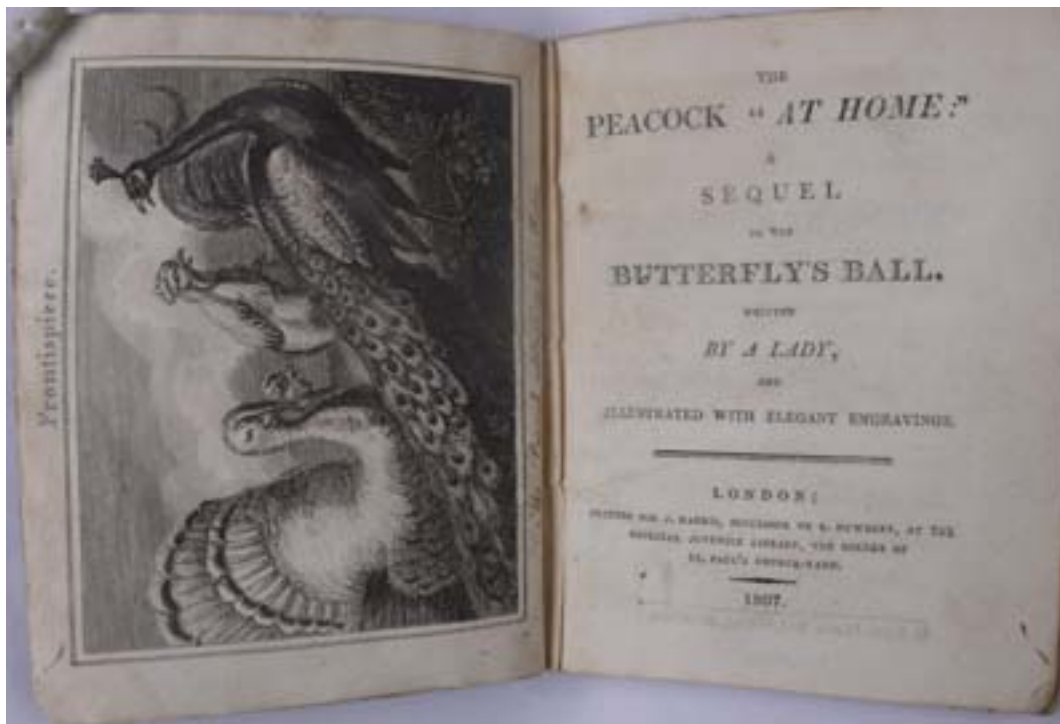


Fig. 3.20 *The peacock "At home"* (J. Harris, 1807), frontispiece and title page. NAL 60.Z.497 (d). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.21 *The peacock "At home"* (J. Harris, 1807), pp. 14-15. NAL 60.Z.497 (e). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

of polite social behaviour to show the birds pecking and slurping at the dishes laid out on the elegant table, a prefiguring of the Mad Hatter's tea party in *Alice* (Fig. 3.21). *The peacock "at home"* received many favourable notices, and the *Gentleman's Magazine* suggested that the poem had afforded 'so much pleasure' that it could be classed with Roscoe's 'exquisite little poem'.⁹⁸ Harris boasted in an early advertisement that *The butterfly's ball* and *The peacock "at home!"* had been 'purchased with avidity, and read with satisfaction, by persons in all ranks of life'.⁹⁹ In an advertisement on the lower cover of *The butterfly's birthday*, Roscoe's own sequel published in 1809, Harris states that the first two books in the series had achieved a combined sale of 'nearly forty thousand copies!!!'¹⁰⁰ There is no evidence to support Harris's extravagant claim, other than the continual reprinting of the books, but the sales hype demonstrates his understanding of the effect of promotional blurb.

Harris's books attracted press attention. The *British Critic* reviewer, while disparaging of the 'infantile' phrases, grammatical faults and 'other little improprieties', which he considered made *The butterfly's ball* an inferior 'trifle' to its companion *The peacock "at home"*, praised the 'original thought' expressed in the poem and regarded it as 'the spontaneous and almost extemporaneous effusion of a man of real genius; with no other object in view than that of actually amusing and instructing his children'.¹⁰¹ It was unusual for publications such as the *British Critic* to review children's books (they considered Trimmer to be the 'fittest person living for it'), but they judged that both poems had such 'peculiar' merit that they should be distinguished 'far above the class in which they appear'.¹⁰² Harris's exciting new books had thus attracted the notice of literary critics and demonstrated the Juvenile Library publications to be a cut above the rest.

98 See the review in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 17 (September 1807), p. 846-7.

99 Lower cover advertisement, *The elephant's ball, and Grande fete champetre: intended as a companion to those much admired pieces, The butterfly's ball, and The peacock "at home"*. By W. B. (Printed for J. Harris, 1807). Moon 32.

100 William Roscoe, *The butterfly's birthday* (Printed for J. Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, and J. Harris, 1809). Moon 727. The poem did not achieve the same success, but was included in a collection of Roscoe family verse: *Poems for Youth, by a family circle*, ed. William Roscoe (Printed for Robinson and Sons; Liverpool: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, and others, 1820), pp. 101-6.

101 *The British Critic*, November 1807, cited in Moon, p. 162.

102 *Ibid.*, p. 162.

Dorset intended *The Peacock* “at home” to be enjoyed by children, but the sophistication of her social satire also attracted an adult audience. The author’s humorous mocking of society conventions received praise from a reader of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*:

[...] if it is considered (by implication and comparative allusion) as a humorous, but unoffending, Satire upon the manner of the times [...] it is one of the neatest Poems which has appeared since the days of Mr Anstey.¹⁰³

Tess Coslett explores the idea that Dorset’s poem, along with many of the other papillonades, may have addressed an adult political agenda; she notes that the anti-French xenophobia and corresponding British patriotism in these poems is very overt.¹⁰⁴ This focus on the Napoleonic wars is evident in *Mermaid* “at home”, which includes an engraving depicting the battle against the French, entitled “‘The Sword and the Pike, the Sabre & Lance were bravely employ’d ‘gainst the legions of France’”.¹⁰⁵ It is clear, therefore, that Harris was attracting an adult audience for his highly popular new series, which would have helped to boost sales.

The *Critical Review*, noting Dorset’s ‘unrivalled’ position in the list of imitators of *The butterfly’s ball*, suggested the author was wasting her talents ‘on nonsense for children [...] which might be much more worthily employed in amusing men and women.’¹⁰⁶ Such comments show that Harris’s new books were raising literary standards in children’s books, but also indicate that children’s writing was still considered an inferior branch of literature. Nevertheless, the backhanded compliment may have prompted Dorset to cater for an adult audience. Writing in the preface to the revised edition of *The peacock* “at home”, published by John Murray in 1809, she explains that the additional natural history notes have been introduced largely in response to ‘those who have expressed a desire to see it

103 Correspondents A. B. and C. D. writing in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 17, November 1807, p. 998. For further reviews see Moon 215. The writer refers to Christopher Anstey (1724-1805), author of the satirical poem *The New Bath Guide* (1766), which mocked the city’s fashionable elite.

104 Tess Coslett, *Talking Animals in British Children’s Fiction, 1786-1914* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2006), pp. 54-6. Dorset’s disapproval of the French Revolution emerges in the memoir that she wrote of Charlotte Smith, published in Walter Scott, *The Miscellaneous Prose Works* of Sir Walter Scott, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Cadell and Co.; London: Longman and others, 1827), IV, 3-48 (p. 38).

105 *The mermaid* “at home!” (Printed for J. Harris, 1809), p. 5. Moon 538.

106 ‘Poetry’, *Critical Review*, 13 (February 1808), 217-8 (p. 217). See also Moon, p. 39.

transplanted from the nursery, to a more honourable station'.¹⁰⁷ However, a review of the revised edition of the poem concluded that the 'elegant little favourite' had lost its 'air of ease and familiarity', suggesting that for some readers the appeal of the book was its capacity to amuse children, rather than instruct.¹⁰⁸ Harris, rather than Murray had won an audience for Dorset.

The continuing appeal of the two poems is evident in the number of times they were reissued; *The butterfly's ball* was claimed to have reached 21 editions by 1841, and Grant and Griffith (successors to the Harris firm) published the 24th edition of *The peacock "at home"* in 1854. The two poems became linked by association, and were sometimes published together.¹⁰⁹ Harris also published them with around a dozen of the companion titles as a volume in his promotional gift set *The poetic garland*.¹¹⁰ *The butterfly's ball* and *The peacock "at home"* long outlived the other 'papillonades' (most of which survived for just one edition) and both titles were reissued with *The elephant's ball* and *The lion's masquerade* in Griffith & Farran's 1883 facsimile reproduction of the first four titles in the series.¹¹¹ It is interesting to note that these early titles were the ones most extensively advertised by Harris in provincial newspapers, usually appearing in his list of Christmas publications suitable for the 'Instruction and Amusement of Young Minds', suggesting that this helped to secure their success.¹¹²

In his introduction to the facsimile volume Welsh pays tribute to Roscoe's 'Nursery Classic', which had appeared in children's anthologies throughout the nineteenth century, noting that the edition currently on sale was illustrated by

107 Dorset, *The peacock at home: and other poems*, p. i.

108 The revised poem was published in *The peacock at home, and other poems* cited above. For the review see 'Poetry', *The British Critic*, 37 (January 1811), 67-8 (p. 67). See also Moon 216.

109 See, for example, Catherine Anne Dorset, and William Roscoe, *The Peacock "at home" by a Lady. To which is added the Butterfly's ball; an original poem, by Mr. Roscoe* (John Harris, [1820?]). For other examples, see Moon 215-8.

110 *The poetic garland*, 4 vols ([J. Harris, c. 1809]), III (set of 8 titles) and IV (includes 3 papillonades). See Moon 666, (p. 185 additional entry).

111 *Harris's cabinet. Numbers one to four: The butterfly's ball* [rev. edn 1808]; *The peacock "At home"*; *The elephant's ball*; *The lion's masquerade reprinted from the editions of 1807 & 1808* (Griffith & Farran, Field & Tuer, Ye Leadenhalle Presse, 1883).

112 See the Christmas advertisement in *Jackson's Oxford Journal*, 12 December 1807. Advertisements were placed throughout December 1807 in Hull, East Anglia, Ipswich, York and Newcastle. The titles were also advertised with *The council of dogs* in *The Morning Chronicle* (London), 16 September 1808.

Harrison Weir.¹¹³ *The butterfly's ball* continued to be included in anthologies throughout the twentieth century, and its popular appeal made it ripe for adaptation.¹¹⁴ It appeared in an elementary lesson book, rewritten in prose as a first reading exercise (using the split-word technique), and was turned into a simple rhyming reader in Dean's 'One penny toy book' series.¹¹⁵ In addition, there were musical interpretations (including songs, an operetta, and a bright orchestral piece for children), as well as a psychedelic picture book that inspired a concept album and rock opera.¹¹⁶ The variety and extent of the creative reworking of *The butterfly's ball* confirms its universal appeal, and demonstrates it to be one of the most significant books in the development of the nursery market. Harris had undoubtedly picked a winning title.

The daisy

Following the spectacular success of the papillonades, Harris introduced the work of Elizabeth Turner, whose new-style moral verse also proved an instant bestseller. Although many children's book historians mention Turner, she has not been the subject of any detailed analysis. However, the longevity of both *Daisy* and its first companion, *The cowslip, or More cautionary stories, in verse. By the author of that much-admired little work, entitled the Daisy*, and the influence that Turner had on future writers, show her to be a significant figure in the development of nursery

¹¹³ Charles Welsh, 'Introduction', *Harris's cabinet*, p. iv.

¹¹⁴ See for example: *The New Oxford Book of Romantic Period Verse*, ed. Jerome J. McGann (Oxford: OUP, 1993), pp. 253-4. McGann contextualises Roscoe with around 80 contemporary poets (some of whom wrote for children), including William Wordsworth (1770-1850), Jane Taylor (1783-1824) and Sydney Owenson (later Lady Morgan, 1776-1859), all of whom had poems published in the same year as *The butterfly's ball*. *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse*, ed. Opie, pp. 131-2; *Children's Literature: An Anthology 1801-1902*, ed. Peter Hunt (n.p.: Blackwell, [n.d.; after 2001]), p. 10-11. Leonard de Vries, *Flowers of Delight* (Dennis Dobson, 1965), pp. 212-24. *From Instruction to Delight: An Anthology of Children's Literature to 1850*, ed. Patricia Demers, 2nd edn (Ontario: OUP, 2004), pp. 301-4.

¹¹⁵ *Elementary instruction for junior students, in a series of lessons* (Harvey and Darton, 1841). See Lawrence Darton, *The Dartons*, p. 82, G287. *Aunt Mavor's nursery tales for good little people* (G. Routledge & Co., 1855); *The butterfly's ball* (Dean & Son, [1880?]).

¹¹⁶ The glee was included in Mr Harrison's Annual Concert at the King's Theatre, advertised in *The Morning Chronicle* (London), 30 April 1807; Henry Robert Addison, *The Butterfly's Ball: or, The Loves of the Plants. An Operatic Extravaganza* (John Miller, 1834); R. M. Ballantyne, *The butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast* (Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1857), [the poem by Roscoe, prose version by the editor and two musical settings, with plates]; Percy Eastman Fletcher, *The Butterfly's ball. Two-part Song for Treble Voices* (Hawkes & Son, 1930); Ryan Frayley, *Butterfly's Ball*, B12495 (USA: FJH Music Company, 2005); Alan Aldridge, *The butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast* (Dorking: Jonathan Cape, 1973), reissued in a boxed gift set in 2008. Aldridge produced a psychedelic picture book based on Dorset's *The peacock "at home"* called *The peacock party* (Jonathan Cape, 1979); concept album *Butterfly's Ball and the Grasshopper's Feast* TPSA 7514 (EMI Purple, 1974) and live rock opera (1975), both produced by Richard Glover.

reading, worthy of closer scrutiny.¹¹⁷

Turner was an amateur poet who, like Roscoe, came from Liverpool. Although there is no evidence to suggest a close connection with the local M.P., it is possible that Turner may have been encouraged to find a publisher for her verse following the success of *The butterfly's ball*. Little is known about how Turner was discovered, but according to the publisher Charles Welsh, *Daisy* was written around 1806 and 'presented by the author to Mr Benjamin Crosby, who published it about that time'; Welsh also reports that *Cowslip* was produced at the 'urgent request' of Crosby, in order to cash in on the popularity of Turner's first book.¹¹⁸ Both titles were published in association with Harris, suggesting that Crosby needed an established firm to share the risk. Congers were still common during this period; Harris linked with several other firms to publish some of the papillonades (see Appendix One).¹¹⁹

Turner may have been inspired to try her hand at writing poetry for children by the recently published collections of morally improving verse compiled by Ann and Jane Taylor, *Original poems* (1804), which is noted by Harvey Darton as the 'book that awoke the nurseries of England, and those in charge of them'.¹²⁰ While showing some similarities with the style of the Taylor sisters' popular rhymes, published by one of Harris's closest rivals, the Darton firm, *Daisy* was original in focusing entirely on children's conduct.¹²¹ Turner probably did not have children of her own, but as a devotee of the Bible Society she would have been motivated to promote Christian values among the young.¹²² This is demonstrated in the subject

117 [Elizabeth Turner], *The cowslip, or more cautionary stories in verse* (Printed for J. Harris and B. Crosby, 1811), shown in Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books*, p. 141. Moon 932.

118 Charles Welsh, 'Introduction', in [Elizabeth Turner], *The daisy*, 30th edn (Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, [1885]), p. 6.

119 Harris bought into a number of shared copyrights. For example, *The Lobster's voyage* (1808) also issued with Crosby & Co..

120 Darton, p. 181.

121 Ann and Jane Taylor, *Original poems for infant minds*, 2 vols (Printed and sold by Darton and Harvey, 1805). *Original poems* included three verses about bad behaviour that may have inspired Turner: 'Meddlesome Matty' (Ann Taylor, v. 2, pp. 3-5), 'Mischief' (Jane Taylor, v. 2, pp. 49-50) and 'Never play with fire' (Adelaide O'Keefe, 1776-1855, v. 1, pp. 57-8). For comment on *Original poems* as a stimulus for Turner's verse see the introduction to the 1902 edition published by Wells Gardner Darton (p. xviii), also reproduced as E. V. Lucas, 'Anne and Jane Taylor', in *A Peculiar Gift: Nineteenth Century Writings on Books for Children*, ed. Lance Salway (Harmondsworth: Kestrel Books, 1976), 216-27 (p. 224).

122 See the obituary for Turner in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 27 (1847), p. 323, which states that following an illness she moved to Staffordshire to be with her sister and subsequently helped her niece to manage a school in Whitchurch, which suggests she had no children of her own to care for her.

matter of her verse, which includes obedience to parents, filial love, honesty, charity and religious observance. However, Turner made light of her moral prescriptions, setting out her rules for proper conduct in amusing verse. *Daisy* thus provided Harris with a very effective bridge between the rational literature for children established at the end of the eighteenth century and the more light-hearted verse that he was currently making a name with.

The book was strategically marketed. The flower title associated it with innocence and purity, and the appended age strap ‘adapted to the ideas of children aged four to eight’, clearly signposted it as a book for the nursery.¹²³ The inclusion of a closing prayer underlined its suitability for Christian families. Each poem was illustrated with a copper-engraved illustration (hand-coloured in the 1808 second edition), making it a more appealing book for the very young than *Original poems*, which did not have pictures.¹²⁴ It was issued in plain buff paper wrappers (13.6 x 8.5 cm), advertised at one shilling plain and two shillings coloured (Fig. 3.22).¹²⁵ Harris thus positioned *Daisy* as a high-quality book, which would amuse as well as instruct young children.

Moon notes the absence of any perfect copy of Harris’s first edition, remarking that nearly every example recorded as being ‘1807’ proves to be the Leadenhall Press reprint published in 1899-1900, dated on the title page as 1807, which has textual variations, pen-and-ink headpiece illustrations that differ from the original, and a gaudy Dutch paper cover that set it apart from the real edition of that date (Fig. 3.23).¹²⁶ This has been my own experience of tracking down copies, even

123 *Cowslip* similarly had an intrinsic meaning: ‘keys to heaven’.

124 The colouring is noted in Brian Alderson and Marjorie Moon, *Childhood Re-Collected* ([n.p.]: Provincial Booksellers Fairs Association, [c. 1994]), p. 23. The engravings were replaced by cheaper woodcuts in the 1810 edition. See Moon 933(4).

125 See ‘Christmas Publications’, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal* 12 December 1807, where *Daisy* is advertised with other Harris titles, such as *The butterfly’s ball*.

126 For comments on the pseudo facsimile, see Moon, p. 129, and 933. *The daisy; or cautionary stories in verse: adapted to the ideas of children from four to eight years old* (Leadenhall Press, Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kant and Co.; NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1899-1900). A facsimile of *Cowslip* was produced simultaneously in the same imprint. The ‘facsimile’ has crude woodcuts printed on the same page as the text. Leadenhall possibly reproduced the pages from a later edition and printed a new first edition title page.



Fig. 3.22 *The daisy*, 2nd edn (J. Harris and Crosby & Co., 1810), cover (14 x 9 cm).
© British Library Board 11645.de.53.

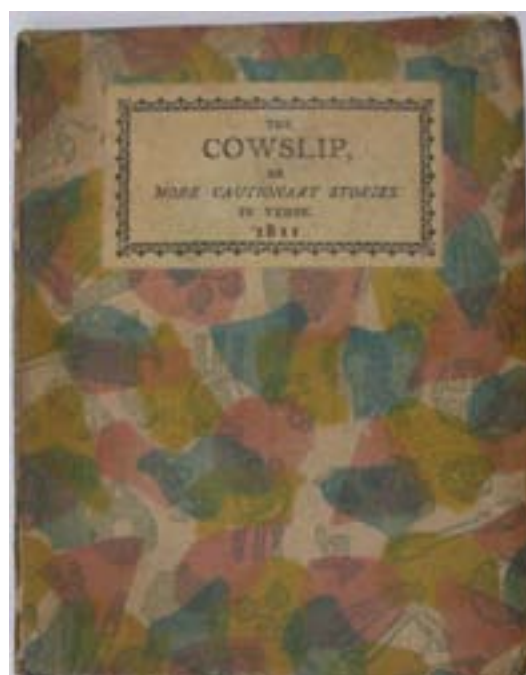


Fig. 3.23 *The cowslip* (Leadenhall Press, 1899-1900), faux facsimile cover (12.5 x 9.5 cm). NAL 861.AA.0082 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.24 *The daisy*, 8th edn (J. Harris and Son, 1820), 'The idle boy'. NAL 861.AA.0080 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.25 *The daisy*, 8th edn (J. Harris and Son, 1820), 'The new penny'. NAL 861.AA.0080 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

in reputable library collections.¹²⁷ In the catalogue of her own children's book collection, Moon describes the first edition as having alternate pages of full-page illustrations, shown in a reproduction of the spread for 'Dangerous sport', which has illustration and text printed on facing pages.¹²⁸ Curiously, the example of *Daisy* in *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books*, selected by the writer and publisher Andrew Tuer (1838-1900), includes what appears to be the correct title page of the first edition (dated 1807, and stating that it is 'Illustrated with thirty engravings on copperplate'); however, examples from the book have the engravings and text printed on the same page.¹²⁹ It is possible, therefore, that *Daisy* may originally have been published in more states than Moon records in her checklist.¹³⁰ This seems likely, given that both *Mother Hubbard* and *The butterfly's ball* were issued by Harris with a variety of textual and pictorial changes in the hurriedly produced early editions.

In the 32 poems included in *Daisy*, Turner sets out a list of 'dos' and 'don'ts' for a child to follow, stressing the need for correct behaviour (the positive incentive), while cautioning against doing wrong (the preventive advice).¹³¹ The majority of the poems, like Fenn's moral stories in *Cobwebs*, centre on the everyday activities of both boys and girls, such as getting up and going to bed, dressing, mealtimes, and playing with siblings and pets. In the poem 'The idle boy', for example, which is reminiscent of Fenn's story 'The morning', Turner exhorts, 'Get up, little boy! You are sleeping too long, / Your brother is dress'd, he is singing a song' (Fig. 3.24).¹³² In 'The new penny', one of four poems about the virtue of charity, Turner shows Miss Ann giving a poor man her 'pretty new penny' she had planned to spend on cakes, so that he can buy bread, much as Fenn had shown the girl selflessly offering

127 For example, The Women's Library catalogue has the 1899-1900 facsimile listed as the '1807' edition, and The British Library have the (rebound) facsimile of *Daisy* catalogued as '1811'. Moon notes that many collectors have been deceived; see Moon, p. 129.

128 Alderson and Moon, *Childhood Re-Collected*, p. 23.

129 Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books*, pp. 137-40.

130 Moon lists a second 1808 edition with blue wrappers, and an 1810 edition to which woodcut headpieces have been added. Moon 933.

131 Welsh suggests that Turner's brother Thomas wrote five or six of the poems in *Daisy*. See Welsh, 'Introduction', in *Daisy* [1885], pp. 5-6.

132 Turner, *Daisy*, p. 21. All citations are from the 1810 edition printed for J. Harris and Crosby & Co., in the British Library.

her crown to a less fortunate girl in 'The baby-house' (Fig. 3.25).¹³³

As in other overtly Christian books, such as Watts's *Divine songs*, quarrelling, stealing, greed, envy, use of bad language and telling lies are shown as unacceptable behaviour that must be curbed, or corrected. For example, when two girls, Jenny and Polly, argue over the different sizes of their new dolls their mother takes the toys away as punishment. However, Turner's reproach is almost tongue in cheek: 'O silly Miss Jenny! To be such a ninny / To quarrel and make such a noise!'.¹³⁴ Like Fenn, Turner is clearly sympathetic to the difficulties young children have in behaving correctly, as shown in 'Miss Peggy', in which the girl is pictured hiding her face in shame after crying for a cake in front of a visitor (Fig. 3.26).¹³⁵ There is only one story about school in *Daisy* ('The good scholar'), but *Cowslip* has eight, suggesting that the follow-up book was designed to appear more educational (Fig. 3.27).

Writers and critics, including Tuer, E. V. Lucas, Alice Meynell, G. K. Chesterton, Darton and Peter Hunt are divided about whether Turner intended to make children laugh about the rules of good conduct; however, the effect of her novel rhymes was undoubtedly subversive.¹³⁶ As Darton suggests, Turner's verse probably survived only because of the 'unholy mirth' that it provoked in later generations; he 'very nearly suspects' her of writing tongue in cheek, particularly given that the 'sternest moralists of her tribe never leapt so swiftly and surely as she from crime to doom'.¹³⁷ Indeed, Turner's lighter touch is evident in 'Dangerous sport', a poem about a boy playing with the fire-poker to make it look 'pretty and red!', which has

133 'The new penny', Turner, *Daisy*, pp. 43-4.

134 'The doll', Turner, *Daisy*, pp. 29-30.

135 'Miss Peggy', Turner, *Daisy*, pp. 19-20.

136 Tuer thinks parents might have noticed the 'unconscious humour' of writers like Turner; see *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books*, p. 5. The critic E. V. Lucas (1868-1938) is equivocal about the author's possible hidden agenda; see his introduction to [Elizabeth Turner], *Mrs Turner's cautionary stories* (Grant Richards, 1897; repr. 1899), p. xvi. Alice Meynell (1847-1922), judges that her own children's amusement at Turner's poems indicates the humour must have been noticed by earlier generations; see *Childhood* (B. T. Batsford, [1913]), pp. 20-2. G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936) believes that children in the 1920s would still appreciate the straightforward 'poetical justice', or 'domestic day of judgement' shown in the rewards and punishments in Turner's rhymes; see his introduction to Elizabeth Turner, *Grandmamma's Book of Rhymes for Children* (Humphrey Milford, OUP, 1927), p. v. Hunt believes that Turner was a 'plain-minded' person, and that such 'literalness' is common today, especially in the work of evangelical censors. See *Children's Literature: An Anthology*, ed. Hunt, p. 12.

137 Darton, pp. 186-9. Darton believes Turner's is capable of humour, because of her tongue-in-cheek poem in *Cowslip* that publicises *Daisy* (p.188).



Fig. 3.26 *The daisy*, 8th edn (J. Harris and Son, 1820), 'Miss Peggy'. NAL 861.AA.0080 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.27 *The cowslip*, 5th edn (J. Harris and Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1817), 'The Duncer'. NAL 60.M.114. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.28 *The daisy* (J. Harris and Crosby and Co., 1810), 'Dangerous sports'. © British Library Board 11645.de.53.

an illustration of the boy dropping the enormous poker as he burns his fingers (Fig. 3.28).¹³⁸ Turner may have picked up on a vogue for comic understatement, as shown in ‘Never play with fire’ a poem by Adelaide O’Keefe (1776-1855).¹³⁹ However, other contemporary children’s poets writing about the dangers of fire are graphic in their depiction of the injuries and scars children suffer when burned; for example, in ‘The dangerous trial’, Mary Belson, shows a girl suffering ‘weeks of pain’.¹⁴⁰ It is possible, therefore, that Turner was gently mocking the over-protective and censorious attitudes towards children’s behaviour expressed by other writers.

Turner’s poetry was clearly very popular. She produced new collections of poems that were printed and sold by various other publishing houses, which traded on the success of *Daisy* and *Cowslip: The Pink* (1823); *The Blue-bell* (1838); *The Crocus* (1844); and *Short poems for young children*, published posthumously around 1850.¹⁴¹ Moon’s listings show that Harris issued 11 editions of *Daisy* by 1824. He introduced a more inviting pictorial cover for the titles around 1815, featuring a rural engraving, but this was soon replaced with a flower illustration, which remained in use until the late 1840s (Figs. 3.29-3.32).¹⁴² The titles were issued together in 1825, and updated in the 1830s with a new set of illustrations by the talented wood-engraver Samuel Williams (1788-1853).¹⁴³ It was subsequently reissued in new editions until the end of the century.¹⁴⁴ From the 1860s to the 1890s at least four new cover designs were introduced (Figs. 3.33-3.36).

¹³⁸ Turner, *Daisy*, p. 61.

¹³⁹ Morag Styles notes that in O’Keefe deliberately underplays the seriousness of a major fire with a final casual comment, which acts rather like ‘oops’ in a comic. See Morag Styles, *From the Garden to the Street* (Cassell, 1998), pp. 120-1.

¹⁴⁰ Mary Belson, ‘The dangerous trial’, in *Simple truths in verse for the amusement and instruction of children at an early age* (W. Darton, Jun., 1812; first publ. 1811), p. 5. See also, ‘Playing with fire’, in *Select rhymes for the nursery* (Printed for Darton and Harvey, 1822; first publ. 1808), 18-20, in which the girl is left permanently scarred on her face (p. 18) and ‘The evil of going too near the fire’, in *Familiar representations* (Printed and published by J. Chappell. 1820?), 31-2, in which Julia suffers ‘excruciating pain’ when burned (p. 32).

¹⁴¹ Elizabeth Turner, *The pink, a flower in the juvenile garland* (Printed for Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1823). Elizabeth Turner, *The blue-bell; or, Tales and fables* (Derby: Printed for the authoress and sold by Darton and Harvey, London and Taylor; Grapel; and W. Freer, Liverpool, 1838). Elizabeth Turner, *The crocus, another series of cautionary stories in verse*. (London: Harvey and Darton; Derby: Henry Mozley and Sons; Liverpool: Grapel, and Richard Taylor; Whitchurch: R. B. Jones, 1844). [Elizabeth Turner], *Short poems for young children* (Darton & Co., [c. 1850]).

¹⁴² Moon 933. John Harris and various incarnations of Baldwin, Cradock and Joy: 1815 to 1840s.

¹⁴³ *Cautionary stories containing the Daisy and Cowslip* (John Harris and Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1825). Moon 931.

¹⁴⁴ Grant and Griffith (successors to the Harris firm) took over publication with the 25th edition of *Daisy*, dated 1840, and Griffin and Farran and Simpkin Marshall and Co. published it from the 1860s to 1880s.



Fig. 3.29 *The cowslip*, 5th edn (J. Harris and Son, and Baldwin Cradock, and Joy, 1817), cover (14 x 9.5cm). NAL 60.M.114. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

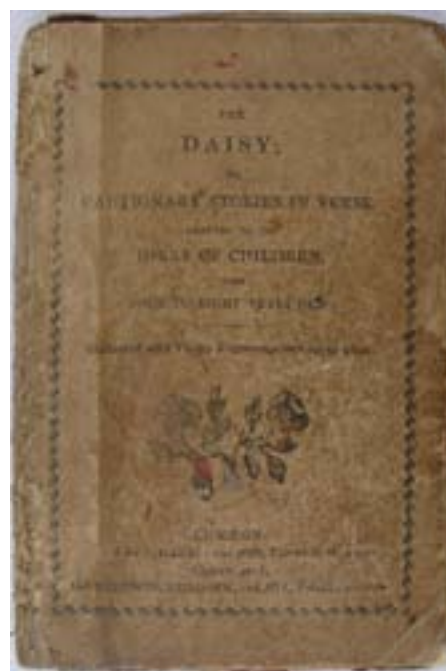


Fig. 3.30 *The daisy*, 10th edn (J. Harris and Son, and Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1823), cover (14 x 9.5cm). NAL 861.AA.2173 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.31 *The cowslip*, 14th edn (John Harris and others, [1833]), cover (14 x 9 cm). NAL 861.AA.2171 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.32 *The cowslip*, 20th edn (Grant and Griffith, [1849?]), cover (14 x 9 cm). NAL 60.V.17. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.33 *The cowslip*, 24th edn (Griffith & Farran, [c. 1860]), cover (14 x 9 cm). NAL 60.O.22. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

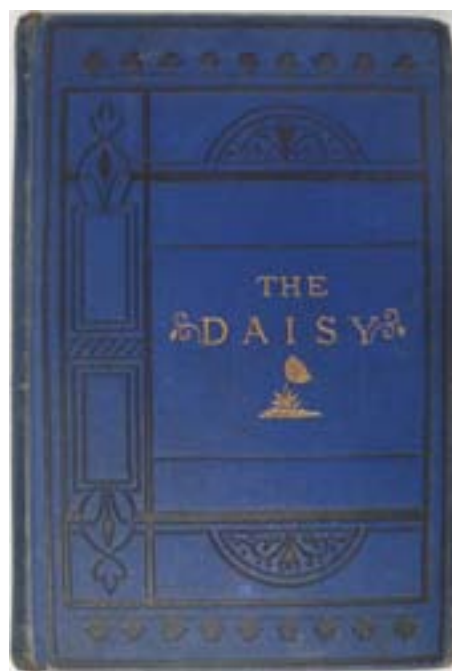


Fig. 3.34 *The daisy*, 29th edn (Griffith & Farran, [1882?]), cover (15 x 10 cm). NAL 861.AA.0451 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

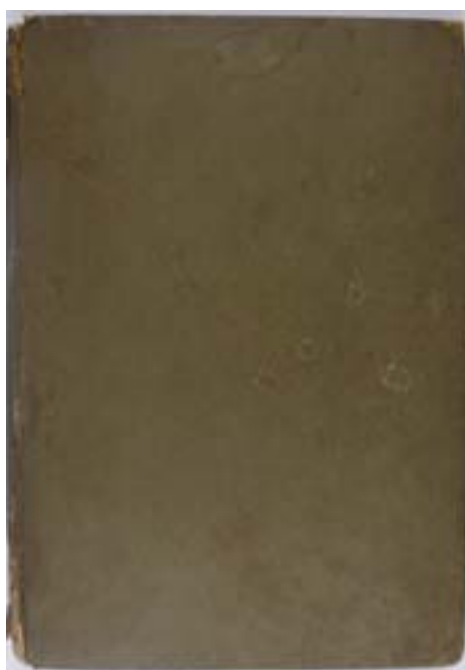


Fig. 3.35 *The daisy*, 30th edn (Griffith, Farran and others, [1885?]), cover (15 x 10.5 cm). NAL 861.AA.0067 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

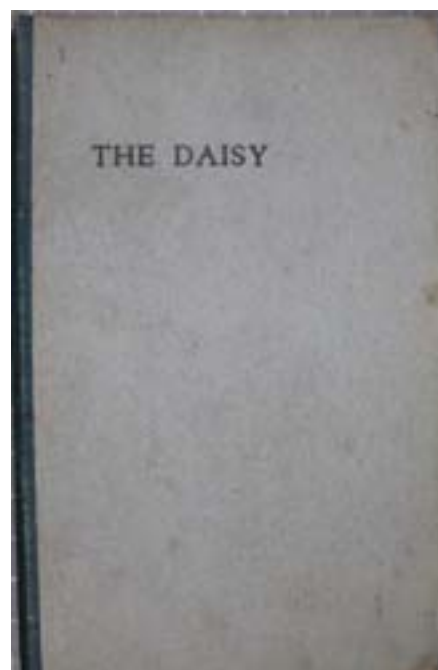


Fig. 3.36 *The daisy*, New edn (Cornish Brothers, 1899), cover (15.5 x 10 cm). NAL 861.AA.0078 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The celebratory 30th edition of *Daisy*, published around 1885 by Griffith and Farran, Ockeden & Welsh, issued with a plain, green-grey paper case binding to resemble the very early volumes, claimed that more than 50,000 copies of *Daisy* and 30,000 copies of *Cowslip* had been printed from the same blocks (Fig. 3.35).¹⁴⁵ There are few examples of pirating; in 1808 the Philadelphia firm of Jacob Johnson published a selection of *Daisy* ‘Part 1’, and The Birmingham firm of Cornish Bros. issued a bogus ‘new edition’ in 1899.¹⁴⁶ The existence of a Dutch edition of *Cowslip*, *Veldviooltjes*, makes it likely that *Daisy* was also published in Holland, although no record has been found.¹⁴⁷ Grant Richards published a selection of verses from the various collections in 1897, called *Mrs Turner’s cautionary stories*, issued three times from 1897 to 1899 in their popular Dumpy Books series.¹⁴⁸

Interest in Turner was revived in the 1927 by Humphrey Milford, who published a colour illustrated selection of her verse (mainly from *Daisy* and *Cowslip*) entitled *Grandmamma’s book of rhymes for children*. Maud Reed Cooper, showing that the verses about naughty children were now found highly amusing, illustrated it with humorous modern drawings. This continuous publishing activity demonstrates that *Daisy*, like *Mother Hubbard* and *The butterfly’s ball*, was considered to be a very solid backlist publication that could be reissued for new generations of children with few changes to the format.

Whatever we conclude about Turner’s motives, her versification of moral instruction undoubtedly injected a novel sense of amusement into moral literature, and had the effect of undermining its pious stance. The same style of humour is evident in *Struwwelpeter* (1846), written by Hienrich Hoffman (1809-1894), which has proved similarly enigmatic for some critics, even though its original title, *Lustige gesichten und drollige bilder* (‘Merry stories and funny pictures’), clearly indicates

145 [Welsh], ‘Introduction’, *Daisy*, [1885], p. 6.

146 The Cornish Bros. edition is shown as the 27th, which Griffin & Farran claimed to have published in 1860. The Jacob Johnson 1808 edition of *Daisy* is reproduced in a facsimile by Bibliolife (www.bibliolife.com).

147 See Vries, *Flowers of Delight*, p. 221.

148 [Elizabeth Turner], *Mrs Turner’s cautionary stories* (Grant Richards, 1897; repr. 1899). An advertisement in the Leadenhall reprints of 1899-1900 similarly point to the nostalgic charm of Turner’s ‘laughter laden’ books.

its humorous nature.¹⁴⁹ Hoffman undoubtedly provides the link between Turner and the satirical verse writers who directly responded to her work from the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁰ Laurence Housman (1865-1959) includes a poem called 'Playing with fire' in his 1911 parody of Turner's moral stricture, *The new child's guide to knowledge* (1911).¹⁵¹ His contemporaries Harry Graham (1874-1936), aka Col. D. Streamer, in *Ruthless rhymes for heartless homes* (1899) and Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953) in *Cautionary tales* (1907) also fool with Turner's style. The tradition has been continued in Roald Dahl's *Revolting rhymes* (1982) and *Dirty beasts* (1983), as well as Michael Rosen's playful *Hairy tales and nursery crimes* (1985).¹⁵² Like *Mother Hubbard* and *The butterfly's ball*, both *Daisy* and *Cowslip* became firmly rooted in the public imagination and have been honoured in various anthologies of verse throughout the twentieth century.¹⁵³

Harris's success with the works of Turner, Martin and Roscoe demonstrates his skill in picking winning authors. All three writers introduced new styles of early reading material that had an enormous impact on the development of the nursery market, expanding its base at the beginning of the nineteenth century to include light-hearted entertaining verse, and influencing future writers and illustrators of nursery verse. Although Turner only created a two-book series for Harris all her subsequent books of poetry referred to her as the author of *Daisy*, indicating how well-known the book had become. Both *Daisy* and *Cowslip* remained in print throughout the nineteenth century. The successful mini-series that Harris generated through *Mother Hubbard* and *The butterfly's ball* demonstrates his ability to commission new titles and group them to encourage purchase of similar books to create a miniature library. This approach was developed even more effectively in the second phase of Harris's Cabinet of Amusement & Instruction, in which he continued to experiment with

149 Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 502.

150 For adaptations and imitations see *ibid.*, p. 503.

151 Laurence Housman, *The New Child's Guide to Knowledge* (Sidgwick & Jackson, 1912) includes a poem in tribute to Turner. Original engravings from *Daisy* and *Cowslip* illustrate the new verses.

152 For a summary of the threads linking didactic verse to macabre humorous rhyme see Styles, *From the Garden to the Street*, pp. 121-4.

153 See 'The hoyden' and 'Susan and Patty' from *Cowslip*, in *A Book of Children's Verse Arranged by Mabel and Lilian Quiller-Couch* (Humphrey Milford; OUP, 1920; first publ. 1911), pp. 201-2. See 'The canary' from *Daisy*, in *The Oxford Book of Children's Verse*, ed. Iona and Peter Opie, p. 136-7. Vries, includes a selection from *Cowslip* in his anthology selected from the Osborne collection *Flowers of Delight*, pp. 199-205. Patricia Demers includes poems from *Daisy* in *From Instruction to Delight*, pp. 295-300.

new styles of nursery literature.

The second Cabinet series

The Second Cabinet series, launched in 1819, was designed to sustain Harris's competitive edge in the increasingly crowded children's market. By 1824 he had added around sixty titles, making it much larger than the first Cabinet series.¹⁵⁴ None of the bright new books caused quite the sensation of *Mother Hubbard*, or *The butterfly's ball* in terms of popular sales. However, the series included a number of experimental books that pioneered new literary forms – such as the limerick, the tongue twister, the comic strip, and picture primer – which laid the foundations for significant future developments in the nursery market.

Harris maintained a strong brand identity for the second Cabinet. Many of the books were designed with a taller page format (18 x 11.5 cm) to enable better spacing of picture and text on the same page, forming a discrete sub-set within the Cabinet promotional umbrella. This sub-set of 16-page booklets, illustrated on each page with a neatly coloured engraving, was issued in stiff paper wrappers (usually in yellow, pink or green) printed with the title and publication details framed within a simple decorative border (Fig. 3.37). Some of the books had an advertisement logo for 'Harris's Cabinet of Amusement & Instruction', featuring an image of his St Paul's Churchyard shop (Fig. 3.38). A list of titles was also printed on the inside of the lower cover, under a Cabinet banner promoting them as 'approved Novelties for the Nursery' (Fig. 3.39). The ad hoc nature of this list is indicated in Harris's inconsistent numbering, which shows that he replaced some items on the list with new titles (Fig. 3.40).

The books were now only available in the hand-painted version – still priced at 1s. 6d. – demonstrating Harris's intention to market them as a quality colour series, and showing his confidence that the expensive booklets would be in demand. Although the key features of the books were humour and verse, the content was varied and the books roughly fall into three categories: amusing illustrated rhyme; entertaining

¹⁵⁴ Moon, pp. 153-4.



Figs. 3.37-3.38 *Punctuation personified* (J. Harris and Son, 1824), upper cover and lower cover advertisement for 'Harris's Cabinet of Amusement & Instruction, showing the St. Paul's Churchyard bookshop, The Juvenile Library. NAL 60.R.BOX XI (xxxiv). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.39 *Simple stories* (J. Harris and Son, 1822), Harris's Cabinet series advertisement. NAL 861. AA.4254 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.40 *Punctuation personified* (J. Harris and Son, 1824), Harris's Cabinet series advertisement. NAL 60.R.BOX XI (xxxiv). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

educational books; and easy readers. A few moral books were marketed under the same umbrella, sometimes issued in the old-style square format, indicating that Harris's selection of titles remained pragmatic. The Second Cabinet, much like the first, consisted of a collection of books that Harris wanted to promote, some of which were not related by content or design.

Harris revamped some of his earlier books of amusing verse to conform to the distinctive new house style; for example *Mother Hubbard*, the first in the series, which was re-issued with a revised title.¹⁵⁵ A new set of illustrations was commissioned in a simply drawn style, specially designed to take colour by Robert Cruikshank (1789-1856).¹⁵⁶ *Mother Hubbard* is portrayed as a comical Punch-like figure with pointed nose and chin, and the lively series of pictures play up the comic aspect of the rhyme (Figs. 3.41-3.42). *The monkey's frolic: a humorous tale* (1823), was just one of a number of books produced in the same spirit.¹⁵⁷ The exaggerated slapstick humour of the pictorial narrative, which follows the monkey's antics as he mischievously attempts to shave the family cat and causes mayhem escaping capture, anticipates the development of the comic strip genre (see Crane's implementation of the form in Chapter Five) (Fig. 3.43).

The history of sixteen wonderful old women, another innovative book, introduced the limerick into literary culture.¹⁵⁸ The five-line nonsense rhymes, were illustrated with amusing pictures of the ridiculous characters, which Harris advertised in the title: '*Illustrated by as many engravings; exhibiting their principal eccentricities and amusements*' (Fig. 3.44). The style was quickly copied by Marshall in *Anecdotes and adventures of fifteen gentlemen* (c.1821), which in turn provided the inspiration for the absurd rhymes written by Edward Lear (1812-1888) in *A book of nonsense* (1846).¹⁵⁹ Other titles jokingly purported to be educational; for example,

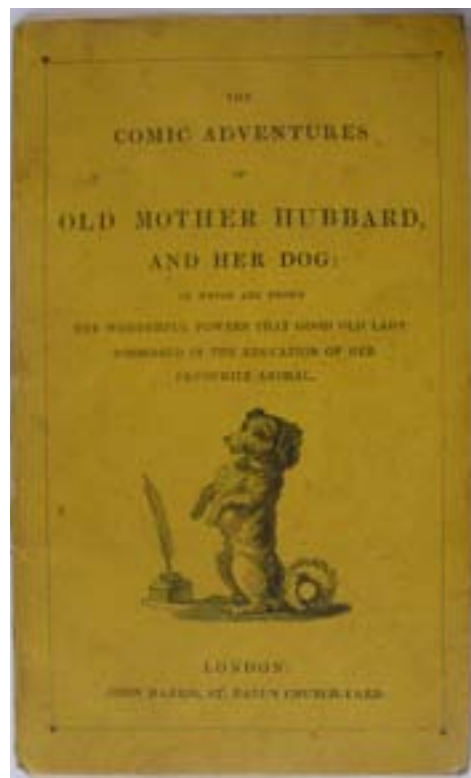
155 *The comic adventures of Old Mother Hubbard, and her dog: in which are shown the wonderful powers that good old lady possessed in the education of her favourite animal* (John Harris and Son, 1819; repr. John Harris, [1830]). Moon notes imperfect copies of 1819 and 1824, plus a publisher's sample of 1820. The undated fourth issue [c. 1830] has 'are shown' instead of 'as shewn' in the title. See Moon 560.

156 Opie and Alderson, *Treasures of Childhood*, p. 68.

157 *The monkey's frolic: a humorous tale* (Printed for Harris and Son, 1823). Moon 552.

158 *The history of sixteen wonderful old women* (1820; Printed for J. Harris and Son, 1822). Moon 360.

159 Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 305.



Figs. 3.41-3.42 *The comic adventures of Mother Hubbard and her dog* (John Harris and Son, 1819; repr. John Harris, [1830]), cover, frontispiece by Robert Cruikshank (1789-1956) and title page. NAL 861.AA.3140 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

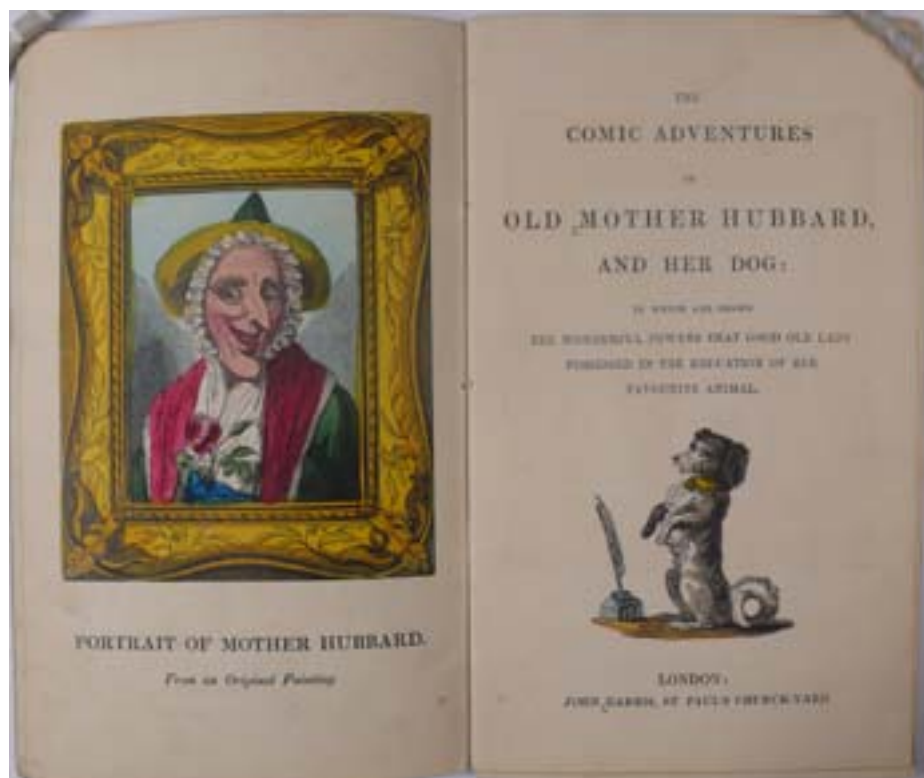




Fig. 3.43 *Monkey's frolic* (Harris and Son, 1823). NAL 861.AA.2587 (REN).
 Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.44 *The history of sixteen wonderful old women* (J. Harris and Son, 1822). NAL
 861.AA.0235 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Peter Piper's practical principles of plain and perfect pronunciation (1819), Harris's revamping of an old rhyme, which playfully mocks social expectations for proficiency in reading aloud, while announcing itself as a means to learn the alphabet.¹⁶⁰ The book had first been published by Harris in 1813, but found a more receptive audience as a Second Cabinet title, suggesting that experimental forms of literature sometimes took a while to catch on. The 'polite preface' offers an amusing taster for the nonsensical alliterative verses, which extend the well-known 'Peter Piper' rhyme:

Peter Piper Puts Pen to Paper, to Produce his Peerless Performance, Proudly Presuming it will Please Princes, Peers, and Parliaments, and Procure him the Praise and Plaudits of their Progeny and prosperity, Proving it Positively to be a paragon, or Playful, Palatable, Proverbial, Panegyrical, Philosophical, Philanthropical phaenomenon.

The ludicrous tongue twisters proved so popular that the book was reissued three times by 1824 and reached its seventh edition by 1843.¹⁶¹ However, it caused consternation for a reviewer of nursery literature in the *London Magazine*, who described it as 'degrading trash', pronouncing that the rising generation would be better served if they learned the alphabet from a hornbook.¹⁶² The critic was slightly missing the point in taking the book seriously, and his comments anticipate the moral revival of the eighteen-thirties, which dampened interest in more imaginative and light-hearted literature. Nevertheless, the reviewer was correct in his observation that Harris was challenging conventional approaches to learning with his new titles.

Although such bright and humorous books were tilted towards entertainment rather than instruction, it was not forgotten that children still needed to get to grips with the basic skills of literacy. Several of the books in the second Cabinet were designed to teach the alphabet, grammar and punctuation in a new and lively way. For example, the illustrated alphabet primer *The history of an apple pie* (1820), which introduces

¹⁶⁰ *Peter Piper's practical principles of plain and perfect pronunciation* (Printed for J. Harris and Son, 1819). The rhyme had appeared at least a generation earlier, according to Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCR*, p. 408.

¹⁶¹ Moon 629.

¹⁶² 'The Literature of the Nursery', in *The London Magazine*, 11 (November 1820), Vol II, 477-83 (p. 479). See also Moon, pp. 156-61.

both lower- and upper-case letters (two to a page), with very simple text printed under the pictures in large, clear type.¹⁶³ The humorous illustrations, set in an upper-middle class domestic home, invite young readers to laugh at the naughtiness of the children. For example, the illustration for ‘a Apple pie. / b Bit it.’ Shows a boy eating a giant pie directly from the plate as it cools by the window (Fig. 3.45). Comparison with a contemporary version of this old alphabet rhyme, *The royal alphabet or history of apple pie* (1820), published by Hodgson, demonstrates the superiority of Harris’s simpler design for educational purposes (Fig. 3.46).¹⁶⁴

The alphabet of Goody Two-Shoes (1820), shows a creative approach to the traditional primer; it includes a syllabary (ba, be, bi and so on), as well as simple reading passages, with clear typography and colourful illustrations (Figs. 3.47-3.48).¹⁶⁵ Harris had first published the title in 1808, in the square format, but the modern design of the second Cabinet series proved more popular; it was reissued in 1822, 1824, and by John Harris junior c.1830.¹⁶⁶ Grant & Griffith, successors to the Harris firm, revived the title in the 1850s.

The visual elements in Harris’s educational titles were thus designed to form an integral part of the lessons. This is also shown in *The paths of learning strewed with flowers: or English grammar illustrated* (1820), which introduces young children to elementary grammar. The illustrations relate examples of the parts of speech to experience in the everyday life of a child, and are accompanied by a simple teaching exercise.¹⁶⁷ For example, the picture for ‘adjectives’ shows three children of different ages at play (a girl with a doll, a smaller boy reading a book and an even younger boy playing with a hoop and stick), labelled ‘short’, ‘shorter’, ‘shortest’, to provide a pictorial reference for keywords in the text (Fig. 3.49). Underscoring is used in each lesson to highlight parts of speech, for example:

163 Z, *The history of an apple pie* (Printed for Harris and Son, 1820), [n.p.]. Harris had first published the title in 1808, with different illustrations and format; it reached its fifth edition by 1839. See Moon 1005.

164 *The royal alphabet or history of an apple pie* (Hodgson & Co., 1822). Hodgson was the trading name of William Godwin; see Darton, p. 194.

165 *The alphabet of Goody Two Shoes* (Printed for J. Harris and Son, 1822).

166 Moon 17.

167 *The paths of learning strewed with flowers* (Harris and Son, 1820). Moon 602.

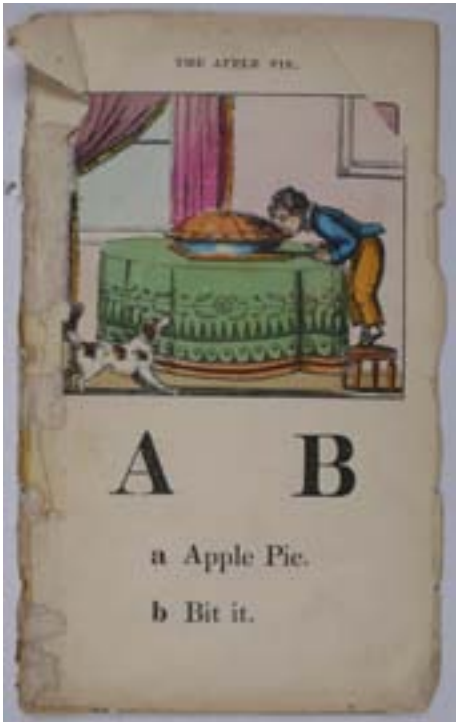


Fig. 3.45 Z, *The history of an apple pie* (Harris and Son, [c. 1820]). NAL 861. AA.3192 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 3.46 *The royal alphabet; or, history of an apple pie* (Hodgson & Co., 1822). NAL 60.T.14. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs. 3.47-3.48 *The alphabet of Goody Two Shoes* (J. Harris and Son, 1822). © British Library Board 012806.ee.33.(7.)



Figs. 3.49-3.50 *The Paths of learning strewed with flowers* (Harris and Son, 1820), pp. 9-10. © British Library Board CH.820/30.



Fig. 3.51 *Punctuation personified* (J. Harris and Son, 1824), pp. 4-5. NAL 60.R.BOX XI (xxxiv). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

A PRONOUN is a word used instead of a noun, to avoid the too frequent repetition of the same word, as Jane has a Garden and she waters it. – she and it are Pronouns for Jane and Garden (Fig. 3.50)

The accompanying illustration of Jane watering her flowers emphasises the link between the child, the garden, and playful learning, a concept that underpinned the pedagogy of the kindergarten movement created by Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852). Walter Crane later adopted the imagery in his baby books (see Chapter Five). John Marshall's *The infant's path strewn with flowers* (1822), although different in concept (it carried an alphabet and various rhymes), was clearly published as a spoiler for Harris's bright new title, demonstrating the competitiveness of the market during the period.

In *The infant's grammar, or A pic-nic party of the parts of speech* (1822), amusing rhyme (not a new concept) is used to introduce grammar to young children.¹⁶⁸ The personified parts of speech are pictured in sixteen hand-coloured engravings and guide the reader through the simple lessons. For example, in the picture accompanying 'An A and a THE, two ARTICLES small [...]' the words are shown on the hats of the characters as they stand like 'two little lackeys' at the 'Etymology' door, ready to usher in the other parts of speech to 'THE Ball' (p. 3). In the companion title, *Punctuation personified, or pointing made easy* (1824), memorable verses are created to show how each punctuation mark signals the length of pause (the comma 'counts one', a semicolon signals 'we must pause & count TWO,' and so on), to provide children with a useful aid to reading aloud. The lessons are enlivened with caricatures of the punctuation marks, demonstrating pioneering use of graphic representation as a teaching device (Fig. 3.51).¹⁶⁹

Many of Harris's Second Cabinet books could be used as easy readers, with the pictures offering fledgling readers clues to the simple text. For example, *The history of the house that Jack built* (1820), the cumulative rhyme first published by John

168 *The infant's grammar, or A pic-nic of the parts of speech* (Printed for Harris and Son, 1822). Moon 396. For an earlier example of lessons in rhyme see Thomas Love Peacock, *Sir Hornbook* (Sharpe and Hailes, 1814), which was revived in the Home Treasury (see Chapter Four). Grenby notes that the educationist John Wowler wrote in verse because it was more easily learned and retained than prose. *Children's Literature*, p. 38.

169 Mr. Stops, *Punctuation personified* (J. Harris and Son, 1824). Moon 829.

Newbery.¹⁷⁰ The book functions as a graded reader, which becomes increasingly challenging as the rhyme gets longer and the type becomes more dense to fit the page (Figs. 3.52-3.53).¹⁷¹ Such easy readers were unconventional, but it would be wrong to assume that Harris was unreservedly flying the flag for new educational methods; the broad range of books in the second Cabinet shows there was still a market for moral literature.

One example is *The infant's friend, or easy reading lessons for young children*, published in 1820, a revised edition of Fenn's spelling and reading book of similar name (first published by Elizabeth Newbery in 1797).¹⁷² The new 'Lady' author includes a dozen of the dialogues from Part II of *Infant's friend*, changing some of the more obviously eighteenth-century modes of expression, and dispensing with the split-word vocabulary list included at the beginning of Fenn's original reading lessons, in order to make the book appear less overtly educational. The design of the new Cabinet reader (printed in large, well-spaced type, with brightly coloured engravings, and pink paper wrappers) effectively disguises its eighteenth-century origins and makes it look modern, although, paradoxically, the mother is more prescriptive and critical of her child's behaviour in the revised text (Fig. 3.54). Nevertheless, Harris's strategy for presenting old-style books in a more entertaining format proved popular: *Infant's friend* was reissued four times over the next ten years.¹⁷³

Advertisements on the cover of *A visit to the bazaar* (1820), another old-style reader, show Harris was aware that he needed to attract business for every type of literature; the front cover carries the 'Harris's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction' banner along with a picture of his bookshop; the back cover carried an advertisement,

170 *The history of the house that Jack built* (Printed for John Harris & Son, 1820; repr. John Harris, [1827]). Moon 362. The rhyme was first published in *Nurse Truelove's New-Year's-gift*, printed for John Newbery c. 1850. See *ODNR*, pp. 272. For the history of the rhyme and its versions, see *ibid.*, pp. 269-73.

171 Harris lengthened the original saga, but according to the Opies his version did not become 'traditional', despite remaining in print for more than fifty years. See Iona and Peter Opie, *A Nursery Companion* (OUP, 1980), p. 123.

172 *The infant's friend, or easy reading lessons for young children* (Printed for Harris and Son, 1820; repr. John Harris, 1824). Moon notes an earlier publisher's sample of 1819; see Moon 395. [Ellenor Fenn], *The infant's friend. Part II. Reading lessons* (Printed for E. Newbery, 1797).

173 The fifth edition was published by John Harris junior in 1829. See Moon 395.



Figs. 3.52-3.53 *The history of the house that Jack built* (Harris & Son, 1820; repr. John Harris, [1827]), first and last openings. NAL 60.R.Box III (xii). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

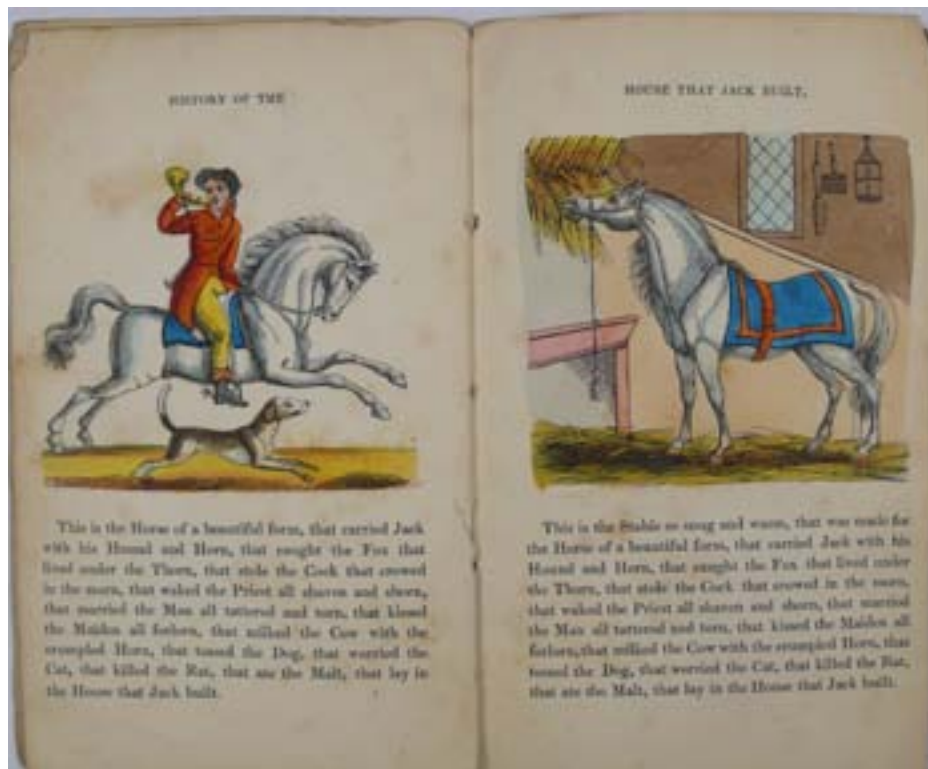




Fig. 3.54 *The infant's friend* (Harris and Son, 1820; repr. John Harris, 1824), pp. 22-23. NAL 60.R.BOX XI (xviii). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs. 3.55-3.56 *A visit to the bazaar* (Harris and Son, 1820), upper cover showing Harris's Juvenile Library logo, and lower cover advertisement. NAL 60.S.79. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

‘The limits of this Cover will not admit of particularizing the variety of Instructive and Amusing Books, Games, &c. which are to be purchased at the JUVENILE LIBRARY (Figs. 3.55-3.56).’¹⁷⁴ *A visit to the bazaar* and other conventional first readers, such as *Short stories in words of two syllables* (1820), enabled Harris to compete for a share of the market that his rivals were also chasing.¹⁷⁵ Harvey and Darton published a number of comparable high-class easy reading books; for example, *Mamma’s present of pictures and poetry* (1820), which has a similar binding to Harris’s *Short stories* – marbled boards backed in roan (14 x 10.5 cm) – and features a number of superbly executed plain engravings.¹⁷⁶ The fact that John Harris junior continued to promote the books of Fenn and Trimmer indicates that instructive moral literature remained an important sector of the nursery market.¹⁷⁷

Summary

Harris gained a reputation as a publisher whose judgement in children’s literature could be trusted, and this undoubtedly contributed to his commercial success. The *Gentleman’s magazine* proclaimed Harris as

[...] the genuine successor of the benevolent and intelligent Mr. John Newbery’, famed *in olden times* for his judicious selection of Books of rational Amusement for the rising generation.¹⁷⁸

The magazine’s obituary for the publisher similarly praised him as

[...] the very worthy successor to Mrs. E. Newbery, at the corner of St. Paul’s Church-yard (whence so many prettily-gilt, clever, and interesting books have taught the young ideas of many generations how to shoot).¹⁷⁹

Harris had earned his place as one of the most revered children’s book publishers

174 *A visit to the bazaar, by the author of Juliet*, 3rd edn. (Printed for Harris and Son, 1820).

175 Elizabeth Semple, *Short stories in words of two syllables* (Printed for J. Harris and Son, 1820).

176 [Adelaide O’Keefe], *Mamma’s present of pictures and poetry* (Printed for Harvey & Darton, 1820).

177 John Harris junior claimed ‘immense’ sales, and ‘continued demand’ for ‘most of’ the seven Mrs Lovechild’s titles advertised on the final page of the 1820 edition of *Daisy*. The advertisement included *The child’s grammar* at 9d. and *Grammatical amusements in a box* at six shillings. *Child’s grammar* had sold ‘upwards of 200,000 copies’ by its 34th edition of 1830 and continued in publication until 1843, the year that Henry Cole launched the Home Treasury series. See Moon 259(7).

178 Review of Alicia Catherine Mant’s *The canary bird* (1817), in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 87 (November 1817), pp. 440-1.

179 Obituary for John Harris, *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, 26 (November 1846), p. 664.

of his generation.

It is a testament to Harris's business acumen that many of his books were market leaders and eventually became nursery classics. The key to his success can be seen in the way he propagated a wide range of titles, using his bestsellers as a platform to develop profitable series. Harris promoted titles that would make 'amusement the vehicle of instruction', but it has been shown that his pioneering books displayed a different concept of entertainment from that experienced by late eighteenth-century children, in which amusing poetry and bright illustrations encouraged enjoyment of words and pictures, rather than simply instilling precepts about good behaviour.

The diversity and complexity of Harris's publishing list reflects the differing attitudes to children's education and behaviour in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Harris did not intentionally set out to banish moral tales, but his novel books undoubtedly helped to undermine the cultural prescriptions of the rational dames. The publisher's pragmatic inclusion of moral literature in his list demonstrates that he was not a literary idealist, or an educational reformer; he was first and foremost an entrepreneur who wanted his business to make money, and perhaps judged that entertaining picture books in verse would generate more excitement than serious educational texts. His children's book business was clearly profitable as he died a wealthy man more than twenty years after his retirement.¹⁸⁰

Harris's innovative titles created prototypes for new styles of literature that were copied by other publishers, stimulating booms that helped expand the nursery market. Darton notes the 'mob illusion' shown in the vogue for novel books like *The butterfly's ball*, which harnessed the buying power of middle-class parents.¹⁸¹ The light-hearted 'papillonades' appealed to adults as well as children, and Harris's great skill was in making them collectable items. His creation of mini-series, and selling of titles in a number of different ways – as two titles bound together, or in an expensive gift anthology – show his ingenuity and salesmanship as a publisher. The

¹⁸⁰ Harris left £30,000 to family and friends in his will. Shefrin, 'Harris, John (1756-1846)', *ODNB*. See also Moon, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸¹ Darton, p. 210.

development of promotional lists, under the banners 'Harris's Juvenile Library' and 'Harris's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction', drew attention to his centrally located bookshop, which parents could visit to buy their children's books. The development of series covers, which sported advertising vignettes of Harris's bookshop, indicates that Harris understood the importance of actively selling the titles in his list.

Children's literature was gaining status through public debate in adult magazines and specialist journals such as Trimmer's *Guardian of Education*, and many writers were now happy to be identified as the authors of entertaining nursery literature. Harris introduced a number of new authors, such as Roscoe, Martin and Turner, whose fresh ideas stimulated major developments in the market. The 'amoral spirit' of radical books such as *Mother Hubbard* and *The butterfly's ball* effectively stirred up a revolution in the nursery, helping it move into a new age.¹⁸²

Talented artists such as the young Mulready, who were eager to experiment with the possibilities for imaginative illustration, were being commissioned to work on children's books. The novelty of hand-coloured pictures generated excitement for Harris's picture-books. Cruikshank's simplified drawing style for the Second Cabinet *Mother Hubbard*, specially designed to make colouring easier, indicates that artists were already experimenting with different techniques, in anticipation of the colour printing of books. Harris's illustrated books represent a major step towards the establishment of picturebook reading in the nursery.

Moon notes that when John Harris senior left the family firm the same high standards of production were maintained, but the publishing list became much more conservative and instructive; the 'sparkling gaiety' of the older man had not been inherited by his son.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, a strong brand identity had been established, and the son was able to profit from his father's legacy. The poet John Clare (1793-1864), for example, bought John Harris junior's books for his children on a trip to London in 1828, including *Little Rhymes* (1828), a title first issued in the second

¹⁸² Darton, p. 202.

¹⁸³ Moon, p. 7.

Cabinet series in 1823: ‘I have bought the dear little creatures four Books [...] tell them that the pictures are all coloured’, he wrote with excitement to his wife Patty.¹⁸⁴

During the period following Harris’s retirement a new conservatism settled on children’s literature, which developed partly as a reaction to the excesses of the reign of George IV. This trend was largely generated by the efforts of religious organisations keen to appropriate children’s literature as a means for moral education in their literacy projects, and by the books of Peter Parley. In the next chapter I will show how Henry Cole’s reaction against the Evangelical children’s writers of the 1830s created the impetus for the next shift in the development of nursery literature, in which the classic tales and fables that Lamb had called for would become permanently established as acceptable reading for young children.

¹⁸⁴ Letter dated 21 March 1828, in *The Letters of John Clare*, ed. J. W. and Anne Tibble (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951), p. 210. *Little rhymes* is listed in Moon 496.

CHAPTER FOUR

Henry Cole and the promotion of art and design

‘We earnestly hope that these little volumes will be welcomed in every family; the paths of learning may thus be paths of pleasantness, and children’s libraries become lustrous with beauty, pleasurable as well as profitable.’¹

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that the publisher John Harris successfully challenged the pre-eminence of didactic children’s literature and was instrumental in leading a trend towards more imaginative and colourful early reading books in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the resurgence of moral and instructional books in the 1830s reignited the debate concerning imaginative versus improving literature that had started with Lamb and his circle at the beginning of the century. The clash of ideas concerning how children should be educated instigated the launch of a series designed to trounce the moralists, which introduced a new approach to nursery reading and radically transformed the design and illustration of children’s books.

‘Felix Summerly’s Home Treasury of Books, Pictures, and Toys’, devised by Henry Cole (1808-1882) in the 1840s, was intended to cultivate artistic awareness in young children, alongside their early reading experience.² The set of nursery books – which includes a reading primer, nursery songs, a rhyming grammar, fairy tales, fables, ballads, myths and bible stories – is illustrated with the works of old masters as well as eminent Victorian artists. Highly critical of his schooling, Cole became an advocate of home education.³ He wrote and edited the Home Treasury books with his own young family in mind,

1 ‘Our Library Table’, *Athenaeum*, 839, 25 November 1843, p. 1045.

2 Cole, a civil servant in the Public Record Office, adopted the pseudonym Felix Summerly for all his commercial ventures, pamphlets, letters to the press and art manufactures. He was knighted for public service in 1875. Ann Cooper, ‘Cole, Sir Henry (1808-1882)’, *ODNB*.

3 Cole attended a preparatory school in Lewisham until the age of eight, where he was whipped and sent to a dark cupboard for reading incorrectly. See Sir Henry Cole, *Autobiography 1808-1823* (ed. his son Alan S. Cole), V&A NAL Special Collections, uncatalogued MSS, f. 6. Thereafter, he attended Christ’s Hospital, where he was entitled to a free place as a direct descendant through his maternal grandmother of Thomas Lockington, a former school treasurer. *Ibid.*, ff. 6-7. Cole was severely beaten by a schoolmaster who was ‘foaming at the mouth’, prevented from attending his mother’s funeral, but won a silver medal for writing. *Ibid.*, ff. 14, 18, 8. See also Ch. I, ‘Childhood and Youth’, in Elizabeth Bonython and Anthony Burton, *The Great Exhibitor* (V&A Publications, 2003), pp. 13-25. Cole’s regret concerning his education is noted in a letter from his old school friend W. A. Peacock, dated 27 May 1832. Henry Cole: Correspondence and Papers 1836-1932, V&A NAL 55.BB (Box 1-19), Box 17/ Letter 36. In a letter dated 19 August 1834, W. A. Peacock responds to Cole’s criticism of his child’s education at school, concluding: ‘I am pretty sure when you have a young one your opinions will alter on this subject if you really think yourself capable of instructing a child besides attending to your own affairs.’ Cole Correspondence, 55.BB 17/ Letter 53.

and was actively involved in their early learning.⁴ Although Cole was challenged by rivals in specific sectors of the nursery market, such as Peter Parley, James Orchard Halliwell, and James Burns (see below), his vision for a complete home learning library for children under eight was unique and revealed the importance of the series editor.

Although the books are not specifically age graded, the inclusion of simple stories printed in large type, as well as books with longer stories set in smaller type, suggests that Cole designed the Home Treasury as a progressive series of readers. A mother's teaching guide was also provided, which promoted a liberal, play-based method for developing pre-reading skills. The inclusion of creative toys – coloured bricks, a painting box, and a set of coloured mosaics – under the same marketing umbrella added a practical element to the nursery series, and a set of ancient and modern prints provided children with their own miniature picture gallery. The Home Treasury thus offered middle-class parents a comprehensive home programme for their children's cultural education.

The high-quality series, published by Joseph Cundall (1818-1895), was produced using the best typography and printing techniques available (at the Chiswick Press), and was adorned with copies of medieval printer's flowers and decorative headpieces. It featured a decorative cover design based on a pattern by Holbein.⁵ The Home Treasury includes early examples of colour printing of children's books.⁶ Some of

4 Cole's young children were educated at home. The boys were then sent to private schools, but the girls' education continued to be supervised by a governess. See Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, p. 192. Cole married his cousin Marian Fairman Bond (1811-1892) in 1833. By 1843 they had three daughters under the age of five and a baby son (an infant son died in 1837). Four more children were born by January 1854. For Cole's family tree see, Sir Henry Cole MS in the National Art Library Cole Collection at the V&A, Miscellanies [v. 1-17] V&A NAL 55.AA.45-62, I (pasted into the scrapbook cover verso). Cole's diaries show he took an active part in his children's education. For example, 'With children at Lessons' (27, 31 August 1846). All diary citations from Henry Cole: Diaries, 1822-1834, 1837-1854, 1856-1882, V&A NAL 55.AA.02-44 (Cole Collection); typed transcripts: 45.C.87-143; Index: 016.091 BON, vols 1-5.

5 The cover was based on designs for goldsmith's work by Hans Holbein, and is illustrated in Henry Shaw's *Encyclopaedia of Ornament* (1842). See Susanna Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty': Henry Cole's Book Ventures", 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge, 1997), II, Fig. 25. Cole tells children about Holbein's pattern in his preface to *Bible events. First series*. (Joseph Cundall, 1843), p. 4.

6 Early editions were printed by lithography, or wood engraved and hand-coloured. Colour printing was introduced in 1846 using wood blocks. For use of colour printing in the Home Treasury see Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", I, pp. 176-81. For colour methods see Ruari McLean, *Victorian Book Design and Colour Printing*, 2nd edn (Faber & Faber, 1972), p. 48. George Baxter's technique for wood-block colour printing, first demonstrated in the frontispiece to Mrs Sherwood's *Caroline Mordaunt* (1835), was not widely adopted before this time. See *OCCL*, pp. 124-5.

the books were sold plain at two shillings, but the more extensively illustrated titles in the ‘bound series’ cost as much as £1. 11s. 6d. for a colour copy, demonstrating Cole’s confidence that moderately affluent middle-class parents like himself would be attracted to buy the books.⁷

Cole was greatly concerned with the content of children’s books as well as their aesthetic appeal and in his prospectus for the Home Treasury he launched a direct attack on the Evangelical children’s writer Peter Parley and his followers, whom he blamed for the ‘narrow fashion’ of moral and factual books.⁸ His fervent plea for imaginative literature echoed Lamb’s bitter attack on rational literature at the beginning of the century.⁹ The Home Treasury series was intended to ‘cultivate the Affections, Fancy, Imagination, and Taste of Children’ and initiated a revival of fairy tales and rhymes that established them as legitimate genres in the English nursery canon.¹⁰

The series found a ready market when it was launched in 1843; however, although many of the titles were reissued and incorporated into nursery compilations right up to the end of the century, Cole’s own involvement in the series was relatively short-lived.¹¹ Nevertheless, his revolutionary approach to children’s books – his innovative use of high art, his experimentation with printing, and his concern with the design of the books – set new standards for the design and illustration of nursery books and raised the status of children’s publishing.¹² The Home Treasury not only provided a showcase for the work of illustrators and printers, but helped to promote their role in the publishing process. Cole’s engagement in all stages in the

7 See classified advertisement for the Home Treasury in *The Examiner* (London), 15 June 1844. Prices were also listed in Home Treasury books.

8 ‘Original Announcement of the Home Treasury’, in *Traditional nursery songs of England* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), (back pages). Evangelicalism raised the ire of Victorian critics; J. S. Mill attacked it in his essay *On Liberty* (1859), and Mathew Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* (1868). See Ian Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: the Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2006, first publ. 1976), p. 10.

9 Cole believed that ‘tales sung or said from time immemorial’ stimulated a child’s ‘fancy, imagination, sympathies, [and] affections’, and their misappropriation as ribald ‘satires for men’, along with the influence of Peter Parley, would be ‘hurtful to children’. Lamb’s letter to Coleridge, dated 23 October 1802, decried the lack of imagination in children’s books. *The Letters of Charles and Mary Lamb*, ed. Marrs, pp. 81-3.

10 Darton, p. 235 suggests the Home Treasury represents the first ‘systematic attempt to give English children the wealth of their own literary inheritance’.

11 The series was sold in 1846 (see below).

12 For Cole’s raising of standards see: Gleeson White, *Children’s Books and their Illustrators* (London: Offices of ‘The Studio’, 1897), 3-68 (p. 22); Whalley, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, pp. 20-1.

production of the series marks him out as a pioneer children's editor.

Children's literature historians have commented on the significance of the Home Treasury from a number of different perspectives – its use of art, revival of the fairy tale, as well as the quarrel with Peter Parley – and the series has also provided the focus for several studies by historians of art and design.¹³ However, the content and context of Cole's ambitious series have not yet been fully evaluated in relation to children's nursery reading. This chapter focuses on Cole's extraordinary vision for nursery education, and explores the way that he situates children's early reading within a clearly defined cultural framework.

The Home Treasury was at the forefront of major developments in the printing and production of children's books and 'primed the engines of the opulent Victorian years that were to come'.¹⁴ The series offers an illuminating view of children's reading experience in the early Victorian period, and the discourse surrounding nursery education.

The grand plan for the Home Treasury

Cole was a man of many talents, which he brought to bear in the design and management of the Home Treasury series. He is best known for his role in organising the Great Exhibition of 1851, as well as setting up the South Kensington Museum (subsequently the Victoria and Albert and Science Museums) and the Royal Albert Hall, along with the Royal College of Music and a nationwide art education

13 For the creation of the series: Geoffrey Summerfield, 'The Making of the Home Treasury', *Children's Literature*, 8 (1980), 35-52; Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, pp. 85-8. For the quarrel between Cole and 'Peter Parley': Darton, pp. 233-5; Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure*, pp. 99-100; Ronald Reichertz, *The Making of the Alice Books* (Montreal and Kingston; London; Ithaca: McGill-Queen's UP, 1997), pp. 21-32. For Cole's fairy tale revival: Muir, *Children's Books in England*, p. 180; Gillian Avery, *Nineteenth Century Children* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), p. 42; Dennis Butts, 'The Beginnings of Victorianism', in *Children's Literature: An Illustrated History*, ed. Hunt, 77-101 (p. 88); Aldridge and Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, pp. 234-5, no. 312. For improvements in colour printing and illustration: White, *Children's Books and their Illustrators*, pp. 21-6; Whalley and Chester, *A History of Children's Book Illustration*, pp. 55-6. For art and design: Ruari McLean, *Victorian Book Design*, pp. 47-64; Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'"; Susanna Avery-Quash, "'The Most Beautiful Delightful Wonderful Fairy Tales Books, All Printed with Pictures'" (Toronto: Toronto Public Library, 1997); Ezra Shales, 'Toying with Design Reform: Henry Cole and Instructive Play for Children', *Journal of Design History*, 22.1 (2009), 3-26.

14 Aldridge and Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 235.

system.¹⁵ Through his friendship with the writer Thomas Love Peacock (1785-1866) Cole was introduced to a number of political and philosophical radicals, such as John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) and Charles Buller (1806-1848), who shaped his ideas on a range of social issues.¹⁶ He became a highly effective reformer: early in his public service career he initiated a successful campaign to regulate the Record Commission; he helped to launch the penny post in 1839; and in the mid 1840s he agitated for reorganisation of the railways.¹⁷ This campaigning zeal is evident in Cole's ambitious plan to reform the nursery market.

Cole's activities as a writer and journalist also informed the series. He researched popular guides to historic buildings and galleries (such as Hampton Court, Westminster Abbey and the National Gallery), which gave him access to the pictures and designs featured in the Home Treasury. He was also a regular contributor to many journals, such as the *Westminster Review* and the *Athenaeum*, which associated him with editors who might favour him with reviews. Cole was, therefore, a great networker, who had links to a range of sources that would help in the preparation and promotion of the series.

Before embarking on the Home Treasury, Cole had written an elementary book of art appreciation, *First exercises for children in light, shade, and colour: with numerous illustrations* (1840), which was designed to teach children between the ages of three and twelve the 'art of seeing', and this clearly planted the seed for the Home Treasury project.¹⁸ In the introduction he suggests that developing powers of observation is of the 'highest importance as a branch of liberal education' in order to cultivate 'the best moral feelings'.¹⁹ *An alphabet of quadrupeds* (1844)

15 At its inception, the RCM was known as the National Training School for Music (1876). See Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, pp. 273, 171.

16 Cole first met Peacock in 1826, when his father rented part of the writer's house. Elizabeth Bonython, *King Cole* (Gresham Press for the V&A, [1982]), pp. 16-18. Bonython notes many of Cole's radical associates, including John Roebuck (1802-1879), William Molesworth (1810-1855), and Edwin Chadwick (1800-1890). Cole edited Peacock's *Works*, published in the 1870s, reviving interest in the writer.

17 Bonython, *King Cole*, pp. 3-4.

18 Henry Cole, *First exercises for children in light, shade, and colour* (Charles Knight & Co., 1840), pp. v-vi. It was published as a supplement to *Drawing for young children*, written by Cole's friend Horace Grant, and published in 1838 by Charles Knight in Association with the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

19 Cole, *First exercises*, pp. v-vi.

demonstrates Cole's innovative educational strategy.²⁰ In a lengthy dedication addressed to his three young daughters Lætitia, Henrietta and Mary (then aged six, four, and two) Cole makes it clear that his primary aim is to introduce them to great art: 'This book puts you in possession of a little Picture Gallery of your own.' He intends the picture alphabet to acquaint his children with the drawings and names of the Dutch artists, Rembrandt, Potter, Everdingen, Dujardin, Berchem and others, but hopes the prints will make them 'long to see the actual pictures' and inspire them to draw.²¹

Examination of a custom-bound copy of *Alphabet of quadrupeds* demonstrates that Cole designed every feature of the book to mimic an superior book of fine art: the cover is purple morocco, with quarter binding in tan calfskin; the title is printed in gilt on the spine; the paper is a heavy art quality with the page-edges stained in red; the type-face is the elegant Caslon Old Face; the text has decorated initial letters; and the title-page features an ornamental headpiece.²² The hand-coloured monochrome engravings are even protected with acid-free tissue.²³ *Alphabet of quadrupeds* had such an impressive design that one cultural journal even listed it as a new 'Art' book.²⁴

Two pages of simply worded natural history notes accompany each full-page illustration (common animals as well as more unusual species, such as the

20 *An alphabet of quadrupeds* (Joseph Cundall, 1844). Cole's friend Charles Wentworth Dilke (1810-1869), editor of the *Athenaeum*, suggested the idea for an alphabet. See Cole Diaries, 7 March 1843.

21 Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn (1606-1669), Paul Potter (1625-1654), Allaert van Everdingen (1621-1675), Karel Dujardin (1626 [Cole states 1640]-1678), Nicolaes Pieterszoon Berchem (1620-1683). Other artists included Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528), Hendrick Hondius (1573-1650), Jean Leducq (dates unknown), Dirk Stoop (1615-1686), Antonio Tempestra (1555-1630), David Teniers the Younger (1610-1690), Jan Van de Velde (1593-1641), plus the contemporary artist Fraser Redgrave (1804-1888), who drew the remainder of the pictures from nature. Cole names the British Museum, Dulwich Picture Gallery, Buckingham Palace, and Hampton Court as places to view the original drawings. Cole's diaries show that he encouraged his children's art: 'Arranging pictures: cutting out prints for Tishy' (30 January 1842); 'Gave Tishy lesson in colouring' (11 September 1842); 'Gave Tishy a lesson in Painting' (14 April 1844); 'Drawing lessons to children' (17 October 1844); 'gave Tishy a drawing lesson' (30 October 1845); 'Looking at pictures with children' (1 February 1846).

22 The copy examined is V&A NAL 861.AA.0479 (REN). An example of the standard gold-stamped red cover design for *Alphabet of quadrupeds* is in the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library, catalogued NR SUM.

23 The technique of tinting lithographs (a single neutral tint over a basic dark outline) gives the same effect as the old chiaroscuro method of woodcut printing, used from the 16th century to imitate Renaissance wash drawings. See Susanna Avery-Quash, 'The Colourful Life of Sir Henry Cole', in *The Victorian Society Annual* (1995), pp. 26-37 (p. 35).

24 *The Critic of Literature, Art, Science, and the Drama*, 1:13 (July 1844), p. 264.

Ichneumon), plus a brief biography of the featured artist. The text for a copy of an original sketch of a rabbit by Dürer in the British Museum, for example, is designed to encourage a child's innocent delight in small animals and observation of the drawing: 'Rabbits are timid little animals, prettily formed with beautiful long ears. They run swiftly, and jump very nimbly [...].' Comparison with Peter Parley's more scientific style and illustration in *Tales of animals* (Cole roundly attacked Goodrich's factual approach to children's books in his launch manifesto for the Home Treasury, detailed below) points up the contrast in the approach of the two author's (Figs. 4.1-4.4).²⁵ Cole clearly intended the book to provide shared reading for his own family: 'You can read the short Histories of the Animals to your little brother', he suggests to his daughters, adding that they should also point out the ornamental letters, 'which Mr Shaw has been so good as to lend me from his beautiful work on Alphabets and Numerals'.²⁶ *Alphabet of quadrupeds* thus offered an introduction to art and natural history, as well as simple reading exercises. Illustrated alphabets were a common feature of children's publishing; however, Cole's creation of an alphabet book to provide a gallery of the work of fine artists represented an entirely new phenomenon.²⁷

Cole's involvement in every aspect of the publication of the Home Treasury – selecting and editing suitable texts and pictures, commissioning new illustration, as well as liaising with all the agents involved in production – enabled him to establish a central role as the series editor, and to create a strong market identity for the series.²⁸ His diary entries provide evidence of the speed with which he made arrangements to enlist support for the project from various writers and artists

25 Peter Parley [Samuel Griswold Goodrich], *Tales of animals*, 6th edn (Printed for Thomas Tegg and Son, 1837), p. 131.

26 In *Alphabets, Numerals, and Devices of the Middle Ages* (1845), Henry Shaw notes the alphabet appeared in an early sixteenth century edition of the *Roman de la Rose*. See Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", II, fig. 84.

27 For typical alphabets see *Pictorial Alphabets*, ed. Ruari McLean (London: Studio Vista; NY: Dover Publications, 1969); Ruth M. Baldwin, *100 Nineteenth-Century Rhyming Alphabets in English* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press; London and Amsterdam: Feffer and Simons 1972).

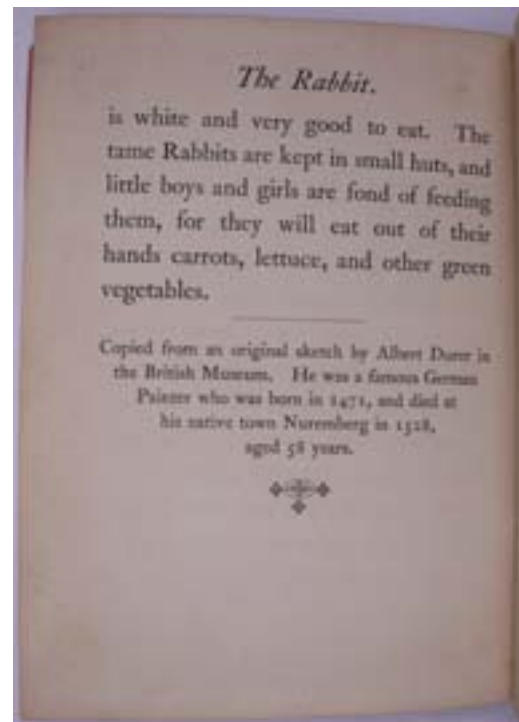
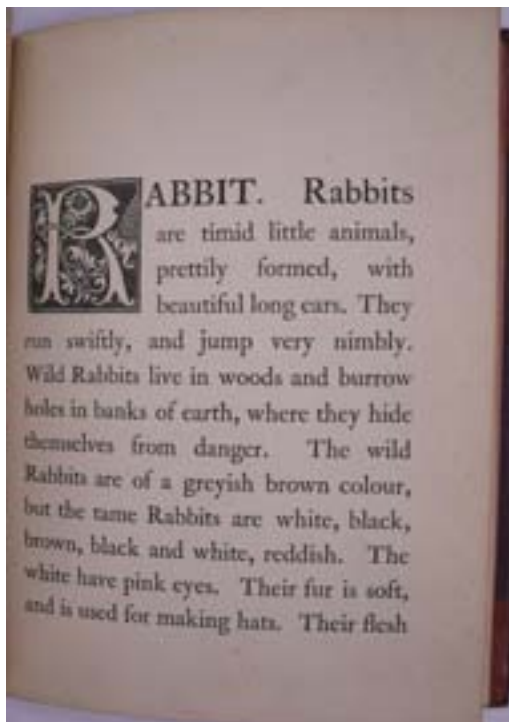
28 Cole began research for the series in 1839 when he read the *Arabian nights*. Cole Diaries, 31 January and 31 August.



Fig. 4.1 Peter Parley [Samuel Goodrich], *Tales of animals* (Thomas Tegg, 1837), 'The rabbit', p. 131. NAL 60.K.32. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.2 *Alphabet of quadrupeds* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), 'Rabbits', after an original drawing by Albrecht Dürer. NAL 861.AA.0479 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs. 4.3-4.4 *Alphabet of quadrupeds* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), 'The rabbit', with ornamented initial letter from a Shaw alphabet. NAL 861.AA.0479 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

with whom he was acquainted, and to make business arrangements.²⁹ Many of Cole's friends offered encouragement; John Stuart Mill was so impressed with the objectives for the Home Treasury he confidently predicted 'Felix Summerly' would become as 'notorious as the Brothers Grimm'.³⁰

Five artists, who were all either Royal Academicians or had trained at the academy schools, agreed to produce drawings for the first title in the series, *Traditional nursery songs of England*: Charles West Cope (1811-1890), John Callcott Horsley (1817-1903), John Linnell (1792-1882), Richard Redgrave (1804-1888), and Thomas Webster (1800-1886).³¹ Each artist agreed to provide further drawings for the series, along with Cole's close friend William Mulready (1786-1863), Henry Courbould (1787-1844), Frederick Taylor (1787-1844), Henry J. Townsend (1810-1890), Edward Henry Wehnert (1813-1868), and John Absolon (1815-1895). Three of Linnell's sons helped with colouring.

Cole encountered problems in agreeing terms with painters who were used to commanding high prices.³² Nevertheless, the artists seem to have applied the same high standards for their illustrations; Mulready commented that 'an artist was judged of by his works most seen' and should therefore 'take as much pains with an illustr[ation]: for a child's book as one of his pictures'.³³ However, despite the enthusiastic support of these distinguished artists, many were unwilling to be named as children's book illustrators, although Cole seems to have devised a plan to 'out' them gradually, announcing in *Nursery songs* that it included 'Pictures by Eminent Modern Artists', and printing their monograms in advertisements and the title-pages of books (Figs. 4.5-4.6). When their identities were revealed it caused a stir and contemporary comment in the press registers the impact of Cole's highly

29 For details of Cole's association with contemporary artists, including the cultural circle around Sir Augustus Callcott (1779-1844), the landscape painter and Royal Academician, see Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, pp. 81-2. Cole notes the recruitment of artists in Henry Cole, *Fifty Years of Public Work of Sir Henry Cole* (George Bell and Sons, 1884), I, p. 101.

30 See Cole Diaries, 26 May 1843.

31 *Nursery songs* 1843, p. iv. Cole names the artists in *Fifty Years*, I, p.101. All became RAs except Linnell, who withdrew his application in 1842.

32 Correspondence with Linnell indicates Cole's delicate negotiation of terms for engraving when the artist demanded 'two guineas for each subject'. Letter, Linnell to Cole (n.d.), and letter, Cole to Linnell 8 March 1843, in Cole Correspondence V&A NAL 55.BB Box 12.

33 Cole Diaries, 18 February 1844.



Fig. 4.5 *Traditional nursery songs* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), frontispiece 'The king was in the parlour' by John Callcott Horsley and title page. NAL 861.AA.3127 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

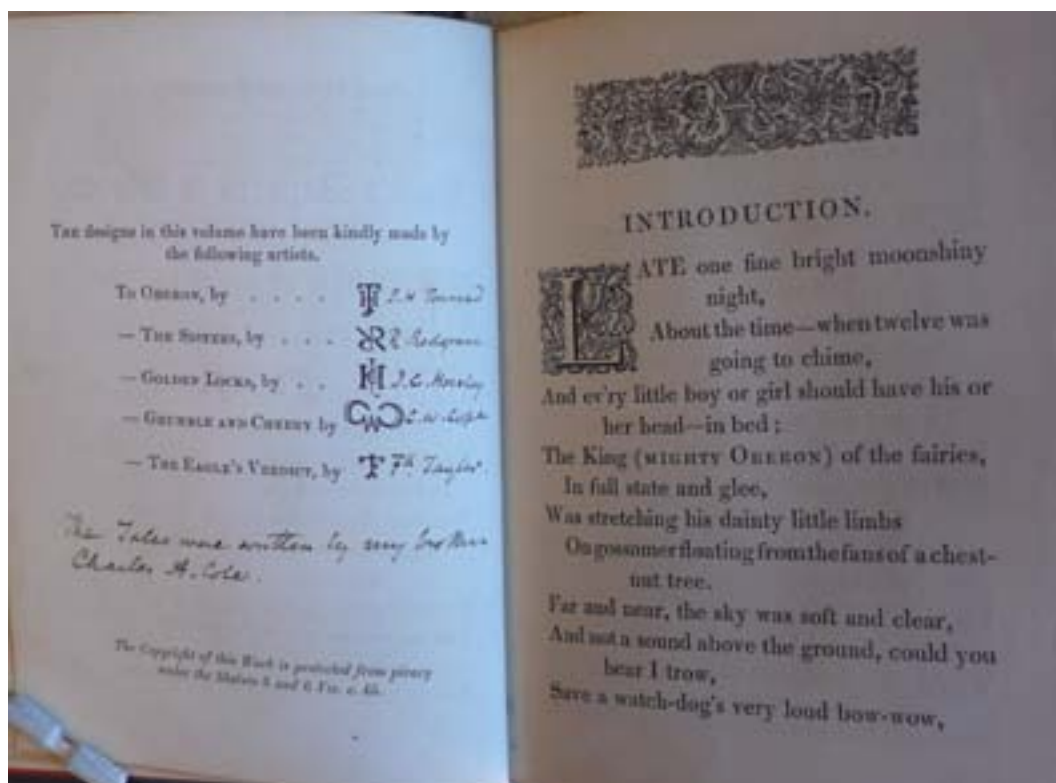


Fig. 4.6 *Faery tales and ballads* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), artist's monograms identified in notes by Henry Cole, and head-piece of seated winged figures playing flutes. NAL 861.AA.0099 (Special Collections). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

original venture. The journalist Thornton Leigh Hunt (1810-1873) wrote:

This is a novelty in infant literature as important as it is daring [...] Think of Mulready, Cope, Horsley, F. Taylor, Webster, Redgrave, and the rest, illustrating Children's Books!³⁴

The ground-breaking nature of the series was also highlighted in the influential journal *The Art-Union*: 'The *education of the eye* in this pleasing manner is almost new to us; we hardly yet comprehend its vast importance and influence [...]'.³⁵ Cole had shown that children's books were worthy of the attention of some of the most highly acclaimed contemporary artists and should be judged accordingly.

Cole first approached his existing publisher George Bell to be his business partner in the series; however, Bell was not in a position to undertake what he considered a risky project.³⁶ The young publisher and bookseller Joseph Cundall, who had taken over N. Hailes's business at the Juvenile Library two years previously, was interviewed just two days later (probably on Bell's recommendation) and, after some initial hesitation, quickly 'assented to an agreement'.³⁷ In the true spirit of the Victorian self-made man, Cole continued his day job at the Record Office while producing the series; it was clearly a demanding schedule, as he makes continual references to the naps that he needs to take in the evening to enable him to continue working into the night.³⁸ For example, in the same week that he secured the publishing agreement for the Home Treasury his son Henry was born, but that did not prevent him steaming ahead with arrangements for the series. Webster was asked if the Etching Club would 'do some Nursery Rhymes & at less than 2

34 T. Hunt, 'Children's Literature', *The Atlas* (November 1843). Cutting pasted in Cole, *Miscellanies*, I, fol. 124-5, V&A NAL 55.AA.45. See also Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, p. 87 (295 n.).

35 Mrs S. C. Hall, 'Thoughts on Juvenile Illustrated Literature', *The Art-Union*, April 1846, p. 111. The author, Anna Maria Hall [née Fielding (1800-1881), was the wife of Samuel Carter Hall, editor of the *Art-Union*, which pioneered fine-art journalism. See Peter Mandler, 'Hall, Samuel Carter (1800-1889)', *ODNB*.

36 Cole notes in his diary that he approached Bell, publisher of the Felix Summerly guide books, on 7 March 1843: 'He declined the nursery Series on acct of Woods absence.' Bell's business partner Woods had absconded. See Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, p. 86.

37 Cole reports first meeting Cundall on 9 March 1843; he had persuaded him to an agreement by 17 March 1843. For biographical details see Ruari McLean, 'Cundall, Joseph (1818-1895)', *ODNB*.

38 Cole's diaries show he worked on several small projects simultaneously, including magazine and guidebook writing. He continued working at Christmas and other holidays, but regularly dined and spent time with his children on Sundays, taking them on visits to his artist friends, as well as the offices of Cundall and Whittingham to discuss business.

guineas'; he haggled with Linnell, who 'agreed to do 4 nursery Rhymes for £2.2 with 10/ for "tinting"'; he recruited Webster, Cope and Redgrave each to provide an illustration for *Nursery songs*; and he borrowed 'a large collection of Children's books' from Sir Augustus Callcott to aid his research.³⁹ He also made time to dine with his children as usual on Sunday, and to call on Webster and Linnell later the same day with his elder daughter, Tishy (then aged four), in tow.⁴⁰ Cole was clearly a prodigious worker, as well as a conscientious parent.

Cole's intention to set new standards for the design and production of children's books is demonstrated in the commissioning of high quality print work and binding. Charles Whittingham (1795-1876), who had recently (1839) taken over management of his uncle's business at the Chiswick Press, had established a reputation as the finest English commercial printer, largely through his artistic association with the antiquarian bookseller, publisher and book designer William Pickering (1796-1854), to whom Cole was entrusting production of the covers for the series.⁴¹ James Hayday (1796-1872), renowned for his superior bookbinding, was recruited as binder.⁴² Day & Haghe, lithographers to the Queen, were also engaged to print some of the illustrations.⁴³ Cole thus arranged the best craftsmen available.

Whittingham and Pickering were reviving the Old Face Roman types of William Caslon, and their work was also characterised by the use of ornaments, initials and architectural frames adapted from Renaissance printers' models. These decorative features complemented Cole's revival of the Holbein design for the cover admirably, extending the fashionable medieval theme into the pages of the books, to give a distinctive look to the series. Avery-Quash has identified the sources of many of the decorative motifs; for example, the fleuron border used in titles published in 1843

39 Cole Diaries, 10-19 March 1843. Linnell later reneged on the agreement. Letter, Linnell to Cole (n.d. [March 1843]), Cole Correspondence V&A NAL 55.BB Box 12.

40 Cole Diaries, 19 March 1843. Laetitia was born 1 June 1838.

41 See Janet Ing Freeman, 'Whittingham, Charles (1795-1876)', *ODNB*. The artist and author Martin Hardie notes the regenerating influence on children's books of the pioneering trio Cole, Cundall and Whittingham in *English Coloured Books*, (Methuen 1906; repr. Fitzhouse, 1990), pp. 263-4.

42 The V&A identify James Hayday as the binder of *Nursery songs* 1843, for example.

43 Avery-Quash, 'The Colourful Life of Sir Henry Cole', p. 32. Once printed, the outlines for the illustrations were colour-tinted by the artist as a guide for colourists. Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", I, p. 175.

(such as *Nursery songs*, the first series of *Bible events*, and *The pleasant history of Reynard the Fox*), which dates back to 1570 (Figs. 4.7-4.10).⁴⁴ Cole also made use of two new alphabets created by Whittingham's daughters, based on original designs from the early sixteenth century.⁴⁵

Cole was actively involved in the crafting of the books, overseeing the reproduction of drawings as well as instigating experiments in printing processes to achieve the most effective results. He already had some experience of drawing and print production; as a young man in the 1820s he had taken drawing lessons from the landscape painter David Cox (1783-1859) and the colourist Charles Wild (1781-1835), and had taken up etching in the belief that he had 'some instinct' to be an artist.⁴⁶ He had additionally acquired knowledge of contemporary wood-engraving techniques through his research on the subject for an article for the *London and Westminster Review* (the study was published in 1838 and is still considered informative to scholars today).⁴⁷ Cole was clearly keen to extend his knowledge of printing techniques while working on the Home Treasury, as he recalled in his autobiography:

The preparation of these books gave me practical knowledge in the technicalities of the arts of type printing, lithography, copper and steel-plate engraving, and printing and bookbinding in all its varieties in metal, wood, leather, &c.⁴⁸

Cole's hands-on approach to the technical aspects of production enabled him to assist with any training that his artists might require. For instance, when Mulready visited the Coles for dinner in January 1844 he was given 'his first trial in Lithogr[aphy]', and promised that he would 'do something'.⁴⁹ Cole also experimented with glyphography (an electrotpe process similar to etching) because it was much cheaper than wood engraving and had the advantage of the artists being able to

44 Avery-Quash cites Plomer (1924) as her source, noting his example of a fleuron border from Henry Bynneman's *Palace of Pleasure*, and Wolfe's 1581 edition of *Antigone*. See Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", I, p. 81. [Henry Cole], *Bible events. First series* (Joseph Cundall, 1843) and *The pleasant history of Reynard the Fox* (Joseph Cundall, 1843). (Hereafter, *Pleasant Reynard*)

45 The letters had been prepared for use in Shaw's *Alphabets, Numerals and Devices of the Middle Ages* (1845) Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", I, p. 84.

46 Cole, 'Autobiography', f. 4. See also, Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, p. 79.

47 Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, p. 80.

48 Cole, *Fifty Years*, I, pp. 101-2. Cole acknowledges Pickering as his 'first master in typography'.

49 Cole Diaries, 13 January 1844. For Cole's printing experiments, see Summerfield, 'The Making of the Home Treasury', pp. 40-1.

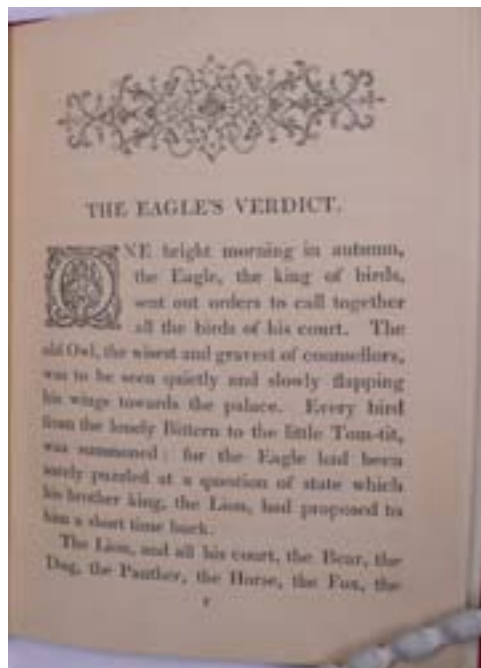


Fig. 4.7 *Grumble and Cheery and The eagle's verdict* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), decorative head-piece and ornated initial letter from a Shaw alphabet. NAL 60.X.127. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

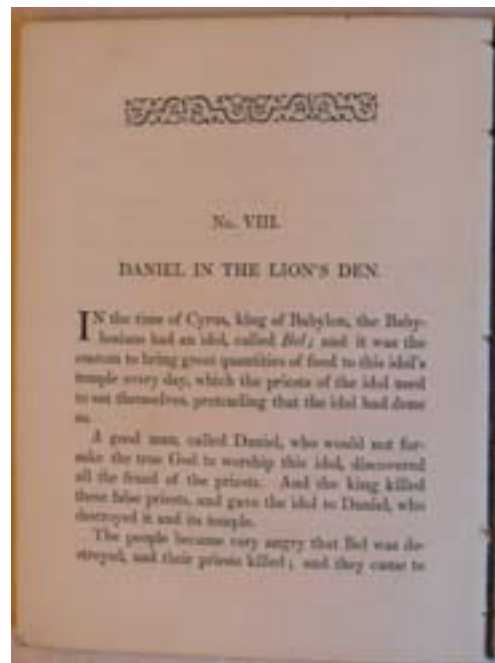


Fig. 4.8 *Bible events. First series* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), fleurion border. NAL Forster 12 mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

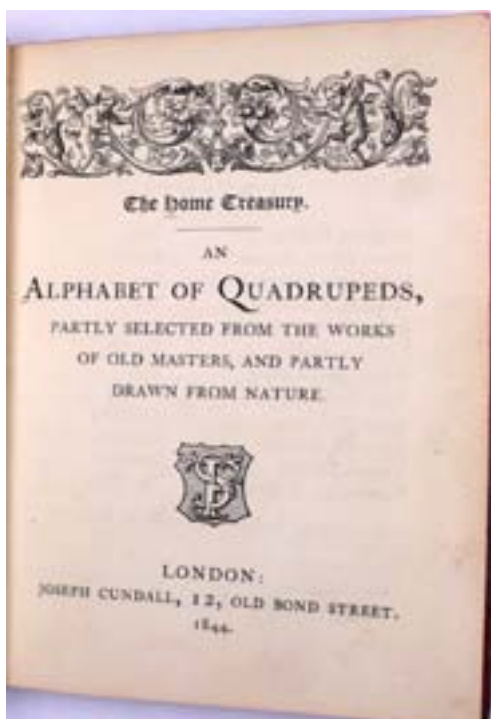


Fig. 4.9 *Alphabet of quadrupeds* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), title page with decorative head-piece of cherubs and cornucopiae. NAL 861.AA.0479 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

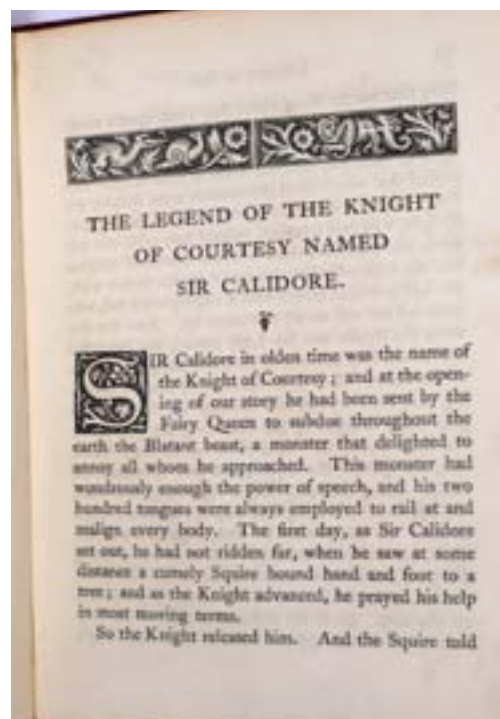


Fig. 4.10 *Spenser's Faerie Queen*, ed. C. Cole (Joseph Cundall, 1846), decorative headpiece. NAL 60.N.28 (LB). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

draw the picture directly on to the plate.⁵⁰ However, he reports that Linnell's sons were 'disgusted with it', and that they revived Bewick's wood-engraving technique to achieve better results (blackening the surface of the woodblock to cut the forms in white).⁵¹ Cole used women wood-engravers trained in the Bewick manner, including his cousins Laura and Charlotte Bond (his wife's sisters) and the two daughters of John Thompson (1785-1866), the skilled wood engraver.⁵² The Home Treasury project thus brought together a highly creative team of illustrators and craftsmen, who were interested in experimenting with new techniques and producing first-class work for commercial consumption.

Cole took considerable interest in quality control; for example, he reports 'retouching' Laura Bond's colouring for *Little Red Riding Hood*, and 'remedying' coloured prints.⁵³ He also undertook the colouring of the Everdingen drawings for *Reynard* (1846), as well as colouring copies of the Home Treasury books to send to the Queen, to ensure their perfection.⁵⁴ Cole thus improved on Harris's coloured engravings, by ensuring that artists applied the tints, not unskilled children.⁵⁵ Cole's research for the artwork was also meticulous. For example, he took great pains to reproduce the original Everdingen drawings for *Pleasant Reynard* (1843), as he explains in the introduction:

Everdingen's original copper-plates of REYNARD THE FOX, have recently come into my possession. Since his time, parts of the plates have been altered by the insertion of ruled skies, &c. By transferring impressions from the copper plates to lithographic stone, and correcting them by comparison with the fine early

50 Glyphography involved covering a copper plate with a thin layer of wax, into which the drawing was cut through with a graver; an electrototype was then taken. Cole explains the process in *Fifty Years*, II, pp. 162-4. Linnell and Mulready were also persuaded to try the technique. See Cole Diary, 22 and 30 January, 13 and 17 February, and 1 March 1843.

51 Cole, *Fifty Years*, II, p. 163. For a summary of the printing techniques used in children's books see Helen Gentry, 'Graphic Processes in Children's Books', in *Illustrators of Children's Books 1744-1945*, ed. Bertha E. Mahony, Louise P. Latimer and Beulah Folmsbee (Boston: The Horn Book Inc., 1947; repr. Godalming, UK: B. F. Stevens & Brown, 1970), 157-72.

52 See Anthony Burton, 'Thompson, John (1785-1866)', *ODNB*. Cole contributed to an article advocating employment of women wood engravers, which appeared in the *London and Westminster Review* in 1840. See Cole, *Fifty Years*, I, p. 102.

53 Cole Diaries, 27 August and 13 December 1843.

54 Cole Diaries, 18, 25 and 27 February 1844. Cole sent a parcel of Home Treasury books to the Queen on 27 February 1844.

55 Avery-Quash believes Cole's experiments with colour wood block illustration 'should be seen as part of the wider revival of this method in England, initiated by the printer William Savage in the 1820s'. See 'The Colourful Life of Sir Henry Cole', pp. 33-4. Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", I, p. 175.

impressions in the [British] Museum and elsewhere, the original appearance of the Etchings has been nearly restored.⁵⁶

Both the British Library and V&A hold a copy of the uncoloured sepia edition, which has the plates grouped at the back of the book; captions for each picture are woven into a narrative printed in large type in the preceding pages, directing the child reader to the appropriate image.⁵⁷ Like *Alphabet of quadrupeds* the book thus doubles as a miniature picture gallery and easy reader. Examples of *Pleasant Reynard* (1843) in the V&A include a standard Home Treasury book with prints and text on consecutive pages, another with contemporary marbled boards three-quarter bound in leather, and a gift box printed with the Holbein cover, which contains a concertina display of prints attached to standard size boards with an accompanying booklet of fables (Figs. 4.11-4.13).⁵⁸ This demonstrates that Cole experimented with a number of formats.

The cover design for the Home Treasury books was very distinctive. The decorative Holbein pattern was adapted to incorporate details of the publisher and key subjects ('fairy tales', 'ballads', 'fables', 'toys') and produced in a number of different styles and colours to create strong visual appeal for the series. The books were issued in one (and sometimes all) of the three main styles of cover. Some titles were issued in a robust colour paper case binding with printed Holbein pattern, lined with decorative endpapers, each book printed in a different colour combination, which typically sold for 2s. 6d. plain, 4s. 6d. coloured (Figs. 4.14-4.17). A less expensive set (typically 2s. plain, 3s. 6d. coloured) was issued with paper covers in a variety of enticing colours, printed with the design in gold (Figs. 4.18-4.21).⁵⁹ The third variant (typically costing 2s. 6d. plain or 4s. 6d. coloured) was a Morocco grain cloth binding in red or blue, panel stamped in blind with the Holbein design, with elegant gold title lettering (Figs. 4.22-4.23).⁶⁰ The books were priced according to

56 *Pleasant Reynard* (1843), ed. Cole, p. 4. The Dutch painter Allaert van Everdingen produced 57 drawings for his edition of *Reynard*. Cole does not explain how he came to be 'in possession' of the plates.

57 See BL 1210.e.32. The edition does not have the original binding.

58 The standard bound edition of *Pleasant Reynard* (1843), the boxed set and the copy with marbled boards are uncatalogued items with the pressmark V&A NAL 1026 (REN).

59 Avery-Quash notes a variant on this style, in which the design is printed in colour on buff paper. See examples in the centre picture pages of "'The Most Beautiful Delightful Wonderful Fairy Tale Books'".

60 The use of cotton cloth bindings probably originated with Whittingham: see Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (Oxford: OUP, 1972), p. 245. For examples of cloth grains see pp. 240-7.



Fig. 4.11 *The pleasant history of Reynard the Fox* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), frontispiece lithographically reproduced etching by Allaert van Everdingen and title page. NAL 1026 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.12 *The pleasant history of Reynard the Fox* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), unfolded leaves of concertina style boxed set. NAL 1026 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.13 *The pleasant history of Reynard the Fox* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), boxed set with separate text booklet. NAL 1026 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.14 *Traditional nursery songs* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), cover. NAL 861.AA.3127 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.15 *Bible events. First series* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), cover. NAL B.FD.BIBE. CU.1843 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

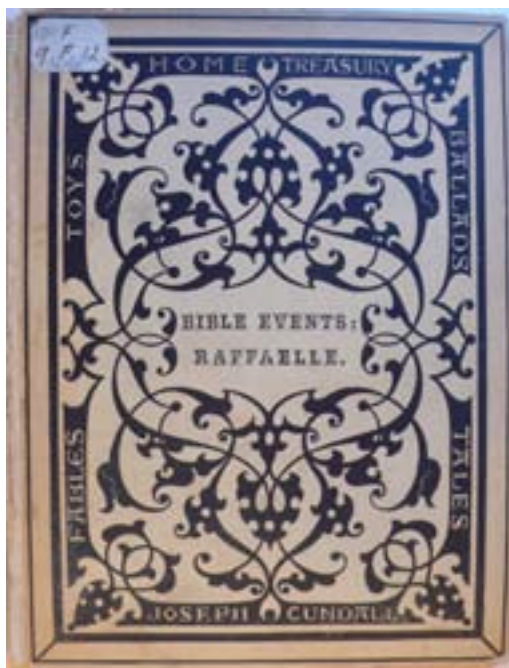


Fig. 4.16 *Bible events. Second series* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), cover. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.17 *Ballads of Chevy Chase* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), cover. NAL B.JA.SUMF. AN.1844 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.18 *Little Red Riding Hood* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), cover. NAL 60.X.125. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.19 *Bible events. Life of Christ: Albert Dürer* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), cover. NAL 60.X.126. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

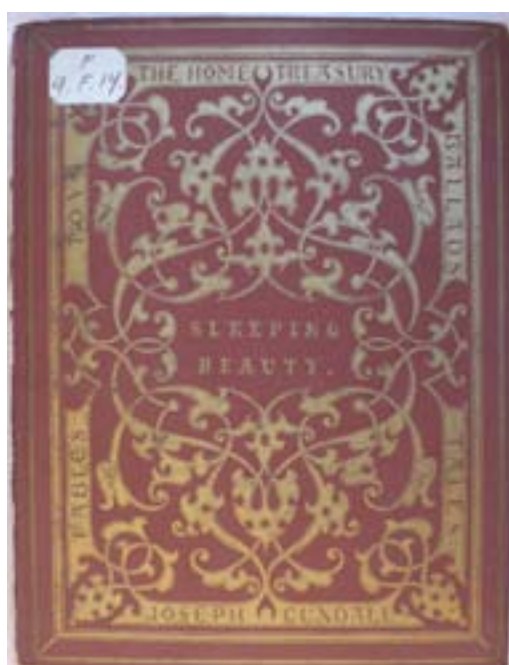


Fig. 4.20 *Rosebud, the sleeping beauty* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), cover. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

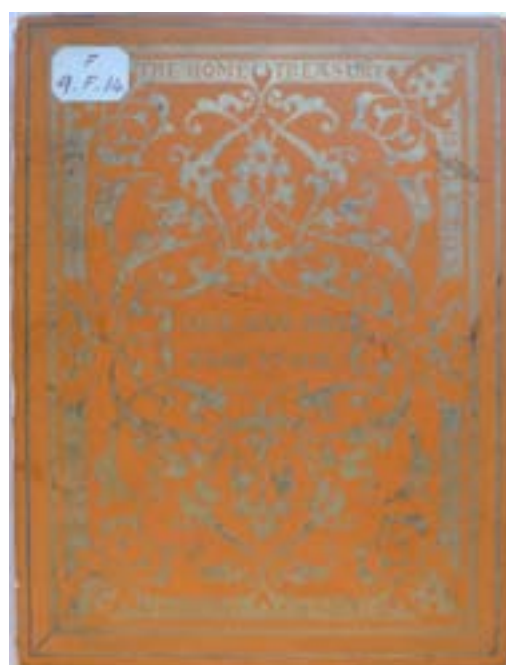


Fig. 4.21 Harriet Jackson, *Jack and the beanstalk* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), cover. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.22 *Bible events, First series*. (Joseph Cundall, 1843), cover. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.23 *Jack the giant killer* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), cover. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

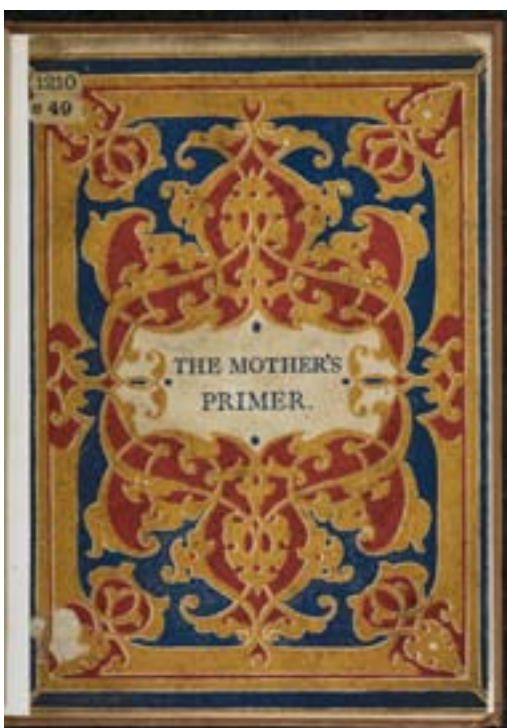


Fig. 4.24 *The mother's primer* (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844), cover. © British Library Board 1210.e.49.

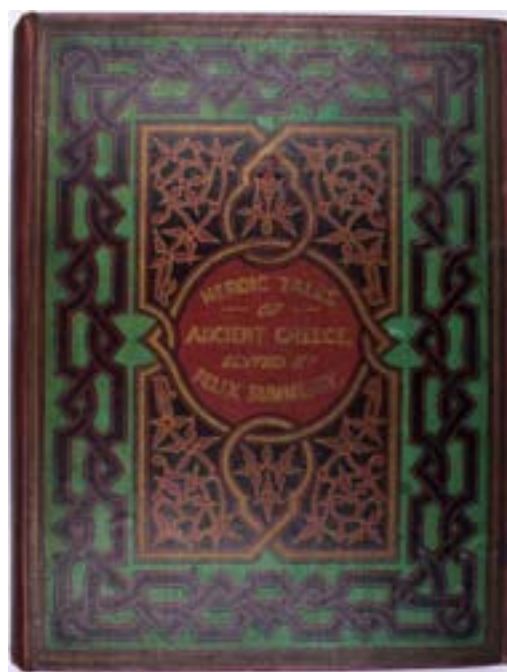


Fig. 4.25 *Heroic tales* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), cover. NAL 861.AA.0767 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the number of prints.⁶¹

The mother's primer: a little child's first steps in many ways, the only title to be issued by the educational publisher Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, features a variation of the Holbein cover design colour-printed on buff paper in red, blue and yellow (Fig. 4.24).⁶² *Heroic tales* and *Pleasant Reynard* (1843) were the only other title to be issued with a different cover design (Fig. 4.25).⁶³ However, all the books, including the *Pleasant Reynard* (1843) and *Alphabet of quadrupeds* variants, were produced to a uniform size (13 x 17 cm), designed to line up neatly as a set on the nursery shelf.

The attractive cover design for the Home Treasury made a great impact. W. M. Thackeray, writing pseudonymously in *Fraser's magazine*, commented on the stimulating effect of the design:

The mere sight of the little books published by Mr. Cundall – of which some thirty now lie upon my table – is as good as a nosegay. Their actual covers are as brilliant as a bed of tulips, and blaze with emerald, and orange, and cobalt, and gold, and crimson.⁶⁴

The *Athenaeum* similarly described the books as ‘a bouquet of flowers’, and in a later review suggested ‘[t]he cover of Summerley's casket is splendid enough to have been stolen from an Alhambra alcove’, describing the Home Treasury as ‘a “gallery” of Art in itself’.⁶⁵ The reviewer in the *Art-Union* pictured her pile of Home Treasury books as ‘a wilderness of romance and fairyland, bright and gorgeous in

61 *Nursery songs* was advertised at 4s. 6d. with eight coloured plates, or 2s. 6d. with one coloured plate, and *Sir Hornbook* 4s. 6d. with eight coloured plates, or 2s. 6d. for tinted plates. See the Joseph Cundall advertisement in *The Examiner*, 20 May 1843, p. 320.

62 [Marian Cole], Mrs Felix Summerly, *The mother's primer* (Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1844). Cole's diary, 21st February 1844 indicates that Cundall walked home with him ‘in order to discuss Longmans proposal that he shd publish the Primer’. Negotiations reached a conclusion on 28 March 1844 when Cole notes: ‘Longman called & we settled terms for Primer, the property in Copyright being mutually divided.’ See also Ruari McLean, *Joseph Cundall* (Pinner: Private Libraries Association, 1976), p. 52.

63 *Heroic tales* features a geometrical design, printed in colour on boards. *Heroic tales of ancient Greece. Related by Berthold Niebuhr to his little son Marcus*, ed. and trans. Henry Cole (Joseph Cundall, 1844).

64 [William Makepeace Thackeray] Michael Angelo Titmarsh, ‘On Some Illustrated Children's Books’, *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 33: 196 (April 1846), 495-502, (p. 497).

65 *Athenaeum*, 8 July 1843, p. 628, and 25 November 1843, p. 1045.

all the elegant tints of orange and vermillion'.⁶⁶ The *Spectator* similarly enthused about the 'gilded covers, coloured prints, and beautiful type', and there were many other plaudits for the pictures and design.⁶⁷ It was even suggested that exposure to the beautiful art would be morally improving:

a child whose taste is insensibly organised by an acquaintance with beauty of form and harmony in colour will grow up with pure harmonious ideas that will effectually prevent the growth of low and vulgar sentiments.⁶⁸

These colourful reviews demonstrate that the Home Treasury books were considered to be unusually beautiful, and had broken new ground in their artistic production.

Illustrations from the Home Treasury were reproduced in *The little painter's portfolio* (1845), a case containing a selection of the pictures by modern painters and old masters, which was promoted in both series advertisements and separate notices (Figs. 4.26-4.27).⁶⁹ The set of prints extended Cole's idea of creating a miniature gallery for children within the series; the poster art was clearly informed by his utilitarian belief that beautiful artworks should be made more accessible. The set of prints, which sold at seven shillings and sixpence, included some plain copies to encourage children to learn colouring. Creativity was also encouraged in *The little colour box for little painters* (1845), an elegant mahogany box with drawer containing a child-sized set of professional artists' materials: '10 superfine Colours (including Cobalt, Crimson Lake, and Indian Yellow), Slab, Brushes, and Specimens of mixed Colours, with hints and directions'.⁷⁰ It was advertised in series advertisements and with *The little painter's portfolio* (Figs. 4.26-4.27). Priced at 6s. 6d, it was another expensive gift.⁷¹ However, Cole instigated production of

66 Hall, 'Thoughts on Juvenile Illustrated Literature', p. 111.

67 *Spectator* review printed in *Nursery songs* 1843. *Ainsworth's Magazine*, 4 (July 1843), pp. 77, praised the 'bright and tasteful colouring' and 'the uncommon beauty of the design', and *Westminster Review*, 40:1 (August 1843), p. 235, remarked on the novel use of the artist's pictures 'such as never hitherto have been seen in books for the young'. All printed in *Nursery songs* 1843.

68 Hall, 'Thoughts on Juvenile Literature'.

69 *The little painter's portfolio of pictures* (Joseph Cundall, 1845). An advertisement for the prints, pasted in Cole *Miscellanies*, 6, p. 258, names the old masters and identifies works by contemporary artists by a single initial (Fig. 4.26). See also Cole, *Fifty years*, II, p. 162.

70 *The little colour box for little painters* (Joseph Cundall, 1845).

71 Cole notes the price of the painting box as 6s. 6d in *Fifty Years*, II, p. 162. Most advertisements show this price; however, it is listed in *Cinderella* (1845) at 8s. 6d.

1846. 259

Felix Summerly's Home Treasury

of Books, Pictures, Toys, etc. purposed
to cultivate the Affections,
Taste of  Fancy, Imagination and
Children.

<p>1. Holbein's Bible Events. <i>First Series.</i> 8 Pictures. 2s. 6d. Coloured, 4s. 6d.</p> <p>2. Raffaello's Bible Events. <i>Second Series.</i> 8 Pictures from the Leggins. 2s. Coloured, 5s. 6d.</p> <p>3. Albert Durer's Bible Events. <i>Third Series.</i> 8 Pictures from Durer's "Small Paintings."</p> <p>4. Michael Angelo's Bible Events. <i>Fourth Series.</i> 8 Pictures from the Sistine Chapel. <i>The above Series in One Volume handsomely bound, 10s. 6d. plain; Splendidly bound, 21s. Coloured.</i></p> <p>5. Traditional Nursery Songs. 8 Pictures. 2s. 6d. Coloured, 4s. 6d.</p> <p>6. The Ballad of Sir Hornbook. With 8 Pictures by H. C. 2s. 6d. Coloured, 4s. 6d.</p> <p>7. Cherry Chase. The Two Ballads with Notes and Music. 4 Pictures. 2s. 6d. Coloured, 4s. 6d.</p> <p>8. Puck's Reports to Oberon. Four New Fairy Tales. The Sisters, Golden Locks, Grumble and Cherry, Arms and Arms. With 8 Pictures. 2s. 6d. Coloured, 4s. 6d.</p> <p>9. Little Red Riding Hood. With 4 Pictures. 2s. Coloured, 3s. 6d.</p> <p>10. Beauty and the Beast. With 4 Pictures. 2s. Coloured, 3s. 6d.</p> <p>11. Jack and the Bean Stalk. With 4 Pictures. 2s. Coloured, 3s. 6d.</p>	<p>12. Cinderella. With 4 Pictures. 2s. Coloured, 3s. 6d.</p> <p>13. Jack the Giant Killer. With 4 Pictures. 2s. Coloured, 3s. 6d.</p> <p>14. The Home Treasury Primer. Printed in Colours.</p> <p>15. Alphabets of Quadrupeds. Selected from the Works of Paul Potter, Karl du Jardin, Teniers, Stoop, Rem- brandt, &c. and drawn from Nature.</p> <p>16. The pleasant History of Reynard the Fox. With 10 Etchings by EVERMULLEN. 6s. 6d. and Coloured, 21s. 6d.</p> <p>17. A Century of Fables. Selected from Aesop, Pilpay, Gay, La Fon- taine, and others. With Pictures by the Old Masters.</p> <p>18. The Little Painter's Portfolio. With 10 Coloured and 4 Plain Pictures by Giotto, S. Del Piombo, Holbein, Ever- dingen, and Modern Artists. 7s. 6d.</p> <p>19. Colour Box for Little Painters. With 16 best Colours, (including Cobalt, Lake, and Indian Yellow) Slab, and Brushes. Hints and Directions and Spec- imens of Mixed Tints. 6s. 6d.</p> <p>20. Teascinted Pastime. A Toy formed out of Mosaics with Back of Patterns. 6s. Double Box, 7s. 6d.</p> <p>21. Box of Terra Cotta Bricks. Geometrically made, one eighth the size of red Bricks, with Plans and Elevations.</p>
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*. To aid the objects of this series, the New Pictures have been designed by eminent
modern Artists. No 7 by **F**; 8 by **W**; 10 by **H**; 11 by **CW**; 12 by
R; 13 by **J**; 14 by the preceding and by **L** and **W**; No. 8 by the
artists who designed 7, 10, 11, 12 and 13. The old Fairy Tales are entirely new
Editions expressly revised. Works to which prices are not affixed are in preparation.

Joseph Lundall, 12, Old Bond Street,
And may be had of all Booksellers throughout the World.

Fig. 4.26 Advertisement for Felix Summerly's Home Treasury. Cole, Miscellanies, 6, p. 259. NAL 55.AA.50 (Cole Collection). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

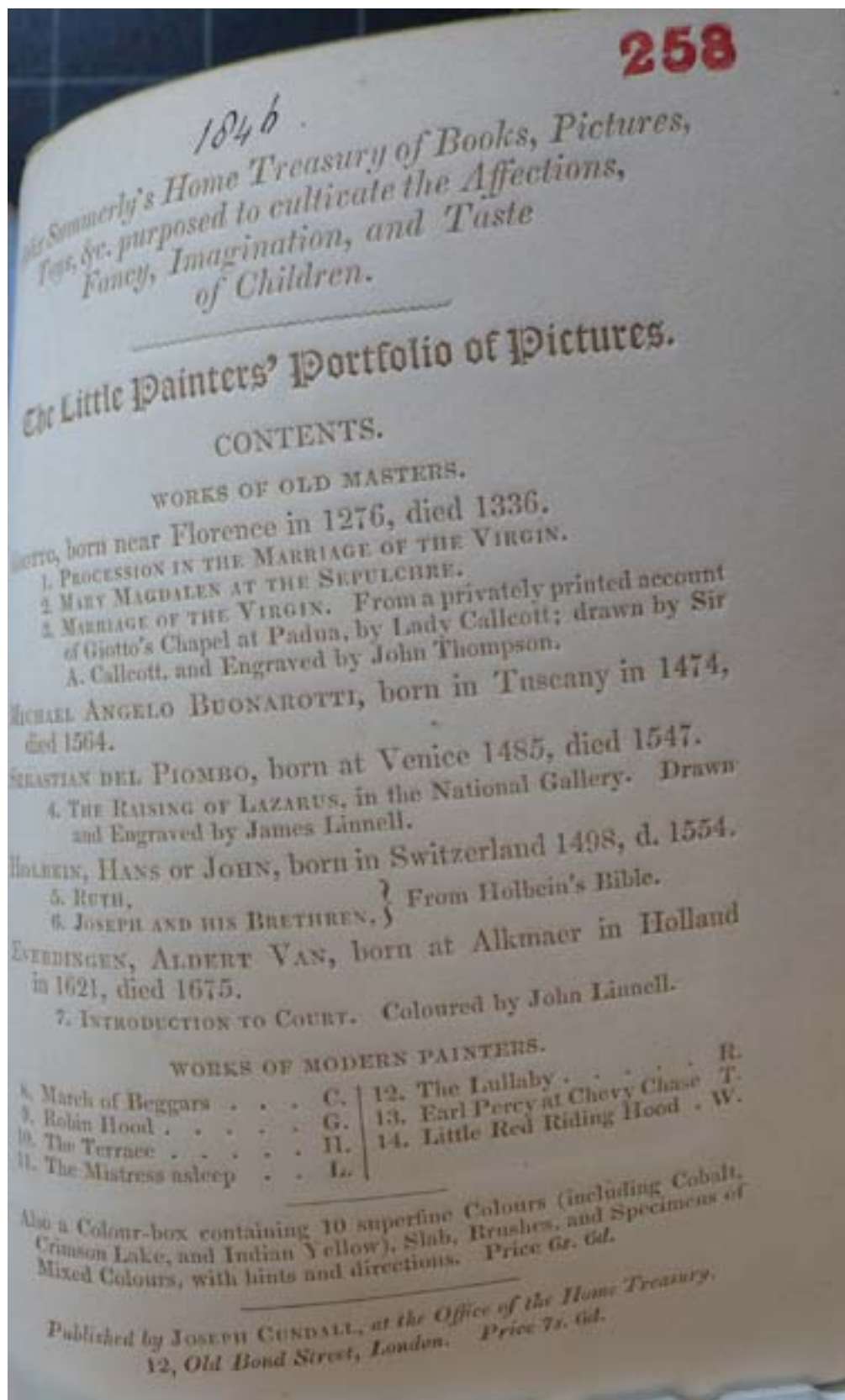


Fig. 4.27 Contents list for *The little painters' portfolio*. Cole, Miscellanies, 6, p. 258. NAL 55.AA.50 (Cole Collection). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

cheaper mass-market sets, as he later noted: ‘Soon after production of the box the Society of Arts issued a prize for a colour-box and obtained one as good as this, which sold for one shilling!’⁷² Cole had led the field once more.

The toys, like the art books, were intended to encourage visits to museums, galleries and buildings of architectural interest, to acquaint children with their cultural heritage and highlight the function of art and design in the public arena.⁷³ *Tesselated pastime* (1843), a box of coloured tesserae (mosaic tiles) ‘purposed to cultivate correct taste in Ornament’, came with a booklet of patterns to help children create their own designs. (Fig. 4.28).⁷⁴ The toy was rushed out in time for Christmas 1843, selling at 7s. 6d., along with the first Christmas card, commissioned by Cole, reflecting the increasing commercialisation of the festive period.⁷⁵ The accompanying booklet includes a 13-page narrative about two young girls playing with the game, which features ‘Mr. Summerly’ helping to cultivate the children’s aesthetic awareness: ‘it will teach you to count, and to make patterns too’.⁷⁶ Woven into the narrative are details of the places where historic and contemporary decorative pattern work and pavements could be examined.⁷⁷

It is interesting to note in the *Tesselated pastime* narrative the echoes of Fenn’s ‘The toyshop’ and ‘The baby house’ stories from *Cobwebs* in Cole’s use of dialogic form and his promotion of the educational value of the toy. Lord Langdale reported to Cole that ‘his daughter was delighted with [the story in] the *Tesselated pastime*,

72 Cole, *Fifty Years*, II, p. 162. Cole suggested the competition for a colour box cheap enough for the ‘poorest artisan’. Cole, *Fifty Years*, I, p. 385. By 1870 eleven million had been sold. Avery-Quash, ‘“The Most Beautiful Books”’, p. 39.

73 Cole visited these places with his children. Cole Diary: ‘With M and children to Windsor’ (26 December 1842); Westminster Abbey (22 October 1845); ‘with children [...] to St James Ch’ (30 August 1846).

74 [Henry Cole] *Tesselated pastime* (Joseph Cundall, 1843). Mclean, *Victorian Book Design*, p. 48.

75 The first Christmas card, illustrated by John Horsley, was published in 1843 as part of Felix Summerly’s Home Treasury series. Dickens published *A Christmas Carol* in the same year. The cards advertised at 2d. plain, or 6d. coloured, or a pack of thirteen at 2s. plain or 6s. coloured. Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*, p. 91. Around a thousand cards were sold. See Cundall’s letter to *The Times*, 2 January 1884, p. 12, titled ‘Christmas Cards’.

76 *Tesselated pastime* (booklet), 3-16, (p. 13). An example of *Tesselated pastime* is in the Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books, Toronto Public Library, G COL; the booklet is also in the Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Opie G 113 (2).

77 The locations featured are: the British Museum Etruscan room; Westminster Abbey; Canterbury Cathedral; the newly built Reform Club in London; Hilditch silk merchants and the London Coffee House (both in Ludgate Hill); the Southwark tile warehouse where ‘Mr. Blashfield’ (John Marriott Blashfield 1811-1882), had developed a new production technique for Tesserae. *Tesselated pastime*, pp. 11, 14-15.



Fig. 4.28 *Tesselated pastime* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), boxed set, including booklet. G COL. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto, Canada.

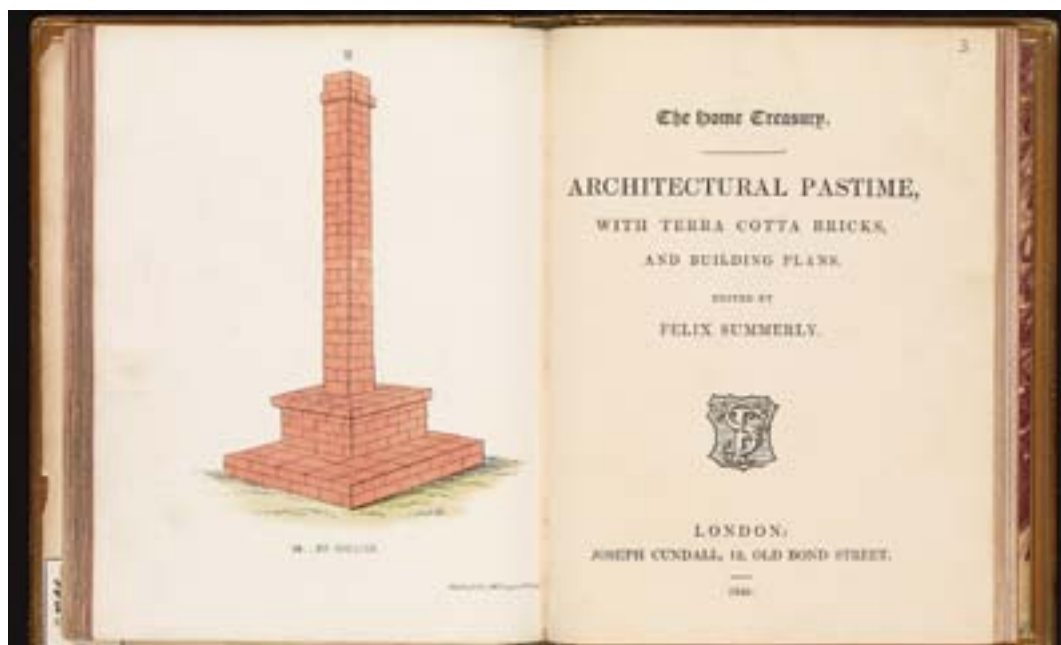


Fig. 4.29 *Architectural pastime* (Joseph Cundall, 1845). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Opie G 113 (3). Open at frontispiece and titlepage.

which he had to read 6 times a day'.⁷⁸ The *Historical Register* applauded Cole's efforts to promote 'real' toys, such as the *Tesselated pastime* and its companion, the *Architectural pastime*, a miniaturised set of building blocks one-eighth standard size (Fig. 4.29).⁷⁹ The sophisticated building set, which cost ten shillings and sixpence, came with a booklet showing children how to build a model house.⁸⁰ The inclusion of educational toys and prints designed to develop creativity and artistic awareness demonstrates that Cole was attuned to a growing interest in the Victorian period for art, architecture and design.⁸¹

Marketing the series

Cole promoted the launch of the Home Treasury books and toys in a full-page advertisement for 'Felix Summerly's Works' in the *Athenaeum*, 10 June 1843, alongside a list of his series of 'Recreation Hand-book Guides', and colour advertisements were also prepared.⁸² In addition, Cundall placed classified advertisements to attract a middle-class audience looking for educational material, or Christmas gifts.⁸³ Interest in the series was also generated in the books themselves; the first edition of *Nursery songs*, for example, carried a range of promotional material, which included in-house advertisements, Cole's launch announcement for the Home Treasury, and favourable reviews elicited from respected journals.

The 'Original Announcement of the Home Treasury' was a very effective marketing ploy and offers a good insight into the target market Cole envisaged. His attack on Peter Parleyism confidently assumes that 'there are many others who entertain the same opinions as himself', who would be similarly critical of children's books intended only for 'the cultivation of the understanding of children' (ie. instruction in

78 Cole Diaries, 26 December 1843.

79 'Toys for Children', *Historical Register*, 10 (8 March 1845), p. 156: 'Let our toys be real [...] Such toys as a box of bricks, or tesserae issued in "Summerly's Home Treasury."' A copy of the journal is pasted in Cole, Miscellanies, V, V&A NAL 55.AA.49. [Henry Cole], *Architectural pastime* (Joseph Cundall, 1845).

80 A copy of the *Architectural pastime* booklet (the bricks have not survived) is in the Bodleian Library, Opie G 113 (3). The launch advertisement for the Home Treasury lists the toy (then 'in preparation') as 'The Box of Terra Cotta Bricks'. *Athenaeum*, 10 June 1843, p. 560.

81 For a scholarly exposition of the toys in relation to cultural education, see Ezra Shales, 'Toying with Design Reform', pp. 3-26. For Cole's promotion of art and design in *Beauty and the beast* see Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", I, pp. 38-41.

82 *Athenaeum*, 10 June 1843, p. 560.

83 For examples, see classified listings in *The Examiner*, 20 May 1843; *Daily News*, 25 May 1846, 30 May 1846, 3 June 1846.

facts).⁸⁴ Reprints of old tales will be ‘carefully cleared of impurities’, and he criticises the ‘usual fashion of children’s books, in which it seems to be assumed that the lowest kind of art is good enough to give first impressions to a child’. Cole’s use of language demonstrates his positioning of the books as a culturally superior brand of literature. ‘Peter Parleyism’ had a strong religious underpinning. The moral stance of Samuel Griswold Goodrich (1793-1860), the American author who had created the popular fictional character, was modelled on the work of the evangelical writer Hannah More (1745-1833). Goodrich met More in 1824, describing his visit to the 79-year-old woman as ‘almost like a pilgrimage to the shrine of a divinity’.⁸⁵ Goodrich condemned rhymes for children as ‘coarse, vulgar, [and] offensive’, and believed that fairy tales were ‘calculated to make criminals of a larger part of the children who read them’.⁸⁶ The popular author’s style is clearly demonstrated in one of his scientific titles, *Tales about the sun, moon, and stars*, in which he tells his readers that he has a ‘deeper wish’ than simply to bring them pleasure: he wants to make them ‘wise and good’, and to this end he reminds them that in the hereafter ‘happiness is the lot of the virtuous, and misery the certain doom of the wicked!’⁸⁷ Goodrich thus became a highly effective disciple of More, and publishers in both America and Britain were quick to capitalise on his popularity, shamelessly pirating copies of his works or using the Peter Parley nom de plume for their own titles. The market for the books was huge: it has been estimated that around seven million copies of the genuine titles were sold over a period of thirty years.⁸⁸

84 For an exposition of the publishing duel and background to the Peter Parley publishing phenomenon see: ‘Two New Englands: “Peter Parley” and “Felix Summerly”’, in Darton, pp. 219-51; Ronald Reichertz, ‘The Battle between Religious, Moral, and Informational Didacticism and Imaginative Literature for Children’, in *The Making of the Alice Books*, pp. 21-32, (pp. 24-7), and related appendix (pp. 108-37); Thwaite, *From Primer to Pleasure*, p. 99-100. Following Cole’s lead, Francis Edward Paget (1806-1882), writing as William Churne, launched *The hope of the Katzekopfs: a fairy tale* (Rugeley: J. T. Walters, 1844) as a counterpoint to ‘useful knowledge’, for a ‘race that has been glutted with Peter Parley’ (see its introduction p. xiv). See also, Avery-Quash, “‘The Most Beautiful Books’”, p. 18 (p. 44 n.).

85 Samuel Griswold Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime*, 2 vols (NY and Auburn: Miller, Orton & Co, 1857), II, pp. 166-7. For biographical details see Daniel Roselle, *Samuel Griswold Goodrich, Creator of Peter Parley* (Albany: State University of NY Press, 1968); *The Story of Peter Parley’s Own Life*, ed. Frank Freeman (Sampson, Low, Son, & Co., 1883).

86 Goodrich, *Recollections of a Lifetime*, II, pp. 318, 321. He acknowledged the ‘music’ in rhymes, and their ‘historical significance’, but emphatically stated, ‘I condemn rhymes for children’. Ibid., pp. 317-8. He refers to fairy tales as ‘old monstrosities’. Ibid., p. 320. His objection stemmed from childhood experiences; he found Little Red Riding Hood ‘very shocking to the mind’, and says it engendered a ‘creeping horror’ at bedtime, because he believed it to be true. *Recollections of a Lifetime*, I, pp. 166-7.

87 ‘Peter Parley’ [Samuel Griswold Goodrich], *Tales about the sun, moon, and stars*, 2nd edn rev. (Printed for Thomas Tegg and Son and others, 1837), p. 329.

88 Darton, p. 227. Darton offers no evidence to support the figures.

Cole's offensive against the proliferation of Evangelical literature caused consternation amongst British publishers. In a direct response to Cole's 'ill-natured' and 'unprovoked attack', the spurious 'Peter Parley', writing for the Darton firm, tried to see off his competitor by dismissing the 'bright colours and large print' of the Home Treasury books, and deploring Cole's inability to produce 'anything that might instruct his readers'.⁸⁹ Encouraged by the reaction, Cole fuelled the hostilities using the introduction to the Home Treasury book of modern fairy tales to mock the utilitarian Jeremy Bentham as a 'long headed prosy fellow, who did nothing but bellow, and rail at FANCY all day long'.⁹⁰ The fact that publishers felt the need to respond to Cole's editorial posturing demonstrates its effectiveness as a marketing tool; Cole had successfully forced a debate about the role of children's literature, which was taking place not just in the press but within the books themselves.

Shortly before the launch of the Home Treasury the journalist and art commentator Elizabeth Rigby (1809-1893) had written an essay complaining about the 'unmerciful load of moral, religious, and scientific preaching' in children's books, in which she criticised American writers such as Peter Parley, and this may have inspired Cole's series manifesto.⁹¹ In the year following the launch of the Home Treasury *The Quarterly Review* published another of Rigby's critical essays, in which she reiterated her call for an end to the continuing 'mania for explanation' in children's books and the '*mere manufacture*' of educational material.⁹² Rigby's recommended reading list offered unequivocal approval for 'The House (sic) Treasury, by Felix Summerly', which she pronounced 'a grateful relief after the spiritless flippancies [...] and other such trash of the day'.⁹³

Another highly opinionated review of books for children by an anonymous writer, also published in 1844, provides further endorsement for the Home Treasury in its

89 'Peter Parley', 'Preface', *Peter Parley's Annual*, vol. V (Darton and Clark, 1844). Goodrich also comments on the scrap with 'Felix Summerly' in *Recollections of a Lifetime*, II, p. 312.

90 [Charles Cole], *Puck's reports to Oberon*, 2 vols (Joseph Cundall, 1844), I, p. 7. Like Goodrich, Bentham's distaste for fantasy stemmed from childhood reading; he was terrified by ghost stories and the devil in *Pilgrim's progress*. See Reichertz, *The Making of the Alice Books*, pp. 108-9.

91 Elizabeth Rigby (later Lady Eastlake), 'Children's Books', *Quarterly Review*, 71 (1842-1843), 54-83, (pp. 60, 74). Rosemary Mitchell, 'Eastlake, Elizabeth, Lady Eastlake (1809-1893)', *ODNB*.

92 Elizabeth Rigby, 'Children's Books', in *The Quarterly Review*, 74 (1844), 16-26 (p. 2).

93 *Ibid.*, p. 19.

agreement with the ‘general spirit’ of Cole’s announcement for the series, which has echoes of Lamb and Coleridge’s Romantic view of childhood in its sentiment:

We look upon children who have been deprived of this poetry of infancy as defrauded not only of an intense pleasure, never to be regained, but of one important part of their internal development, which, if checked in its natural season, is destroyed for ever.⁹⁴

Thackeray voiced his opinions in his article on children’s books two years later. Applauding Cole’s fairy tales as ‘skilfully recast’, he decries the books he was given as a child:

Abominable attempts were made in those days to make useful books for children, and cram science down their throats as calomel used to be administered under the pretence of a spoonful of currant-jelly.⁹⁵

This playing out of arguments that had informed critical debate on children’s literature since early in the century continued throughout the Victorian years, with Dickens, Ruskin and Andrew Lang (1844-1912) articulating their viewpoints.⁹⁶ Cole’s rejection of the Peter Parley phenomenon thus appears to have been carefully pitched to chime with contemporary discourse surrounding the content of nursery literature: the time was ripe for a fairy tale revival.

Nursery rhymes, fairy tales, fables and ballads

Cole launched the Home Treasury series with *Nursery songs* in May 1843, offering the collection of rhymes in exuberant style to

[...] mothers, sisters, kind-hearted aunts, and even fathers, who are summoned to become unwilling vocalists at break of day by young gentlemen and ladies of two years old; and to all having the charge of children, who are alive to the importance of cultivating their natural keenness for rhyme, rhythm, melody, and instinctive love for fun [...] ⁹⁷

⁹⁴ ‘Books for Children’, *British and Foreign Review; or, European Quarterly Journal*, 17: 33 (April 1844), 68-81 (p. 80-1).

⁹⁵ Thackeray, ‘On Some Children’s Illustrated Books’, pp. 501, 496.

⁹⁶ For reprints of articles from the period, including those by Dickens, Ruskin and Lang, see *A Peculiar Gift*, ed. Lance Salway (Harmondsworth: Kestrel Books, 1976), pp. 111-67.

⁹⁷ *Nursery songs*, 1843, p. iii-iv.

This was a book signalling that very young children were at the heart of family life, and deserving of their own literature.

Cole arranged the ninety-six rhymes alphabetically, with the initial letter capitalised and enlarged, so that it doubled as an alphabet. Delicate hand-coloured watercolour drawings by Linnell, Cope, Redgrave, Horsley and Webster offered the first glimpse of Cole's vision for nursery art (Figs. 4.30-4.31).⁹⁸ The title page announcing the illustrations to be by 'Eminent Modern Artists', plus the secrecy surrounding their identity, was intended to stimulate interest in the new-style book and proved a clever marketing strategy:

I am not at liberty to mention the names of the artists who in their kind sympathies for children have obliged me with them. It is a mystery to be unravelled by the little people themselves [...]⁹⁹

Intrigued, the *Athenaeum* quickly set about trying to match the pictures to artists, correctly identifying images by Horsley, Redgrave, Cope and Webster in its article on the new book.¹⁰⁰ With the unofficial injunction preventing naming of the artists effectively breached, Cole capitalised on the revelation, printing the review in the back pages of *Nursery songs*.¹⁰¹ Gradually, the artists were being revealed, as planned.¹⁰²

Cole had been researching rhymes for ten years before he published the first volume of *Nursery songs*, and acknowledged the antiquarian scholar Joseph Ritson (1752-1803) as his main source; Ritson had produced one of the first collections of nursery songs, *Gammer Gurton's garland*, in the latter quarter of the eighteenth century.¹⁰³

98 Cole attributes the artists in *Fifty Years*, II, p. 161. Linnell: 'One, two, three, four, five', 'Sleepy Head', 'Up in a Basket', and 'Cat sleep by the fire'; Cope: 'The Beggars coming to Town'; Horsley: 'King in the counting House'; Redgrave: 'By, O my Baby!'; Webster: 'Mother Hubbard'.

99 Cole, *Nursery songs*, 1843, p. iv.

100 *Athenaeum*, 8 July 1843, p. 628.

101 Bonython and Burton suggest Cole may have written some unattributed reviews, although they concede that the reviews of named journalists were equally effusive. See *The Great Exhibitor*, p. 87.

102 Cole notes in his diary that Mulready 'gave leave to advertise his name' on 16 July 1844.

103 Cole refers to 'all the editions by Ritson, and others' he could find. *Nursery songs*, I, p. iv. There were three editions of Ritson's rhymes: *Gammer Gurton's garland*, a collection of 39 rhymes, was printed by and for R. Christopher in Stockton around 1795; a revised edition was issued around 1799; a third 'enlarged' edition was produced seven years after Ritson's death by his nephew. *ODNR*, pp. 34-5.



Fig. 4.30 *Traditional nursery songs* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), '1,2,3,4,5' with illustration by John Linnell, pp. 26-27. NAL 861.AA.3127 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.31 *Traditional nursery songs* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), 'Old Mother Hubbard' with illustration by Thomas Webster, pp. 22-23. NAL 861.AA.3127 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Cole is not specific about other sources, but he possibly consulted another notable compilation of Mother Goose rhymes, *Songs for the nursery*, published by Darton in 1818, which contains a significant number of the verses selected for the Home Treasury.¹⁰⁴ Cole chose four-line songs, or couplets taken from longer verses, some with an explicit educational function, for example: ‘Great A, little A, bouncing B! / The cat’s in the cupboard, and she can’t see’, or ‘One, two, buckle my shoe ...’, but many were intended purely for amusement, such as ‘Sing! sing! what shall I sing? / The cat’s run away with the pudding bag string’. Cole was also given rhymes by the children’s writer Maria, Lady Callcott (1785-1842), who took great interest in the project, such as a unique variant of the Scottish dandling song ‘Dance to your Daddy / My bonny laddy’.¹⁰⁵ The inclusion of Catherine Martin’s ‘Old Mother Hubbard’, as published by John Harris in 1805, demonstrates that the rhyme had secured its place in nursery tradition, and the character took on a new persona for Victorian children in Webster’s amusing illustration (Fig. 4.31).¹⁰⁶

Cole was not alone in thinking that the time was ripe for a revival of the old nursery songs. The literary scholar James Orchard Halliwell had compiled *The Nursery Rhymes of England, Collected Principally from Oral Tradition*, in a private edition for the Percy Society in 1842, which was published for the general public in 1843, the year *Nursery songs* went to press.¹⁰⁷ The Percy Society was considered an authority on oral tradition, and Halliwell’s book, with its emphasis on literary heritage, may have helped to prime the market for Cole’s novel book of illustrated

104 *Songs for the nursery* (Printed for and by William Darton Jun., 1818). The title was first published in 1805 by Benjamin Tabart; another edition was issued by R. Phillips in 1812. *ODNR*, p. 35. In an accounts section in his 1843 diary, Cole notes he had spent one shilling on nursery rhymes.

105 MS ‘A Scotch Nursery Song’, Cole Correspondence V&A NAL 55.BB Box 12. See Cole diaries 16 February 1841 regarding a conversation about plans for a rhyme book with Maria, Lady Callcott (1785-1842), wife of Sir Augustus Callcott. The Opies do not record this variant. See *ODNR*, pp. 164-5.

106 Cundall reproduced Webster’s illustration in William Thoms, *The old story books of England* (Joseph Cundall, [1845]), (n. p.). See also Avery-Quash, “‘Creating a Taste for Beauty’”, II, Figs. 140-1.

107 *The Nursery Rhymes of England*, ed. James Orchard Halliwell (Printed for The Percy Society, 1842). J. O. Halliwell, *The Nursery Rhymes of England*, 2nd edn (John Russell Smith, 1843). The antiquarian James Orchard Halliwell (1820-1889) was a founder member of the Percy Society, which concerned itself with old English lyrics and ballads. See Arthur Freeman and Janet Ing Freeman ‘Phillipps, James Orchard Halliwell- (1820-1889)’, *ODNB*. The 1842 edition included 300 rhymes arranged in 14 categories (such as ‘Historical’, ‘Riddles’, and ‘Lullabies’).

baby rhymes.¹⁰⁸ Cole notes that sales were high: '[To] Cundalls who was in excellent spirits with his subscriptions, which though unfinished & excluding the tinted Ed: of Nursery Songs amounts to more than 800.'¹⁰⁹ Just six months after the launch of the title, Cundall was preparing the final batch of *Nursery songs*, giving Cole the confidence to embark on an enlarged second edition.¹¹⁰ However, Cole's diary entry for 25 November 1844, stating 'Cundall sells 7/- Nursery Rhymes instead of his own', indicates his exasperation at the publisher's failure to promote the title in his bookshop, which set back plans for the revised edition.¹¹¹ When it was eventually issued in 1846, newly adorned with decorated initial letters, it faced competition from a new 'illustrated' edition of Halliwell's rhymes (Figs. 4.32-4.33).¹¹²

Cole emphasised the cultural heritage of the rhymes in *Nursery songs* and his selection of fairy tales for the Home Treasury similarly rested on a tradition of nursery literature with its roots in oral culture. Seven well-known fairy tales were adapted for the series: 'Little Red Riding Hood', 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Jack and the beanstalk', 'Jack the giant killer', 'Sleeping Beauty', 'Cinderella' and 'Dick Whittington and his cat', each rewritten and illustrated with fine illustrations, to make them look superior to chapbook versions issued with cheap woodcuts.¹¹³ He also added four new literary tales written specially for the series by his brother Charles Cole, which were published in two slim volumes under the umbrella title of *Puck's reports to Oberon*, designed to add a Shakespearian element to the children's

108 *The Athenaeum*, 8 July 1843, p. 628, felt unable to assess the 'purity' of Cole's rhymes and suggested the Percy Society might be a better judge. Justin G. Schiller observes that although Halliwell's book lacked the 'authoritative annotation' found in Peter and Iona Opie's *ODNR* it formed the basis for significant nursery-rhyme books up until publication of their book in 1951. See *Pioneering Collectible Children's Books* (Charlottesville, VA: Book Arts Press, 2002), p. 9.

109 Cole Diaries, 26 May 1843.

110 See Cole Diaries, 11 January 1844: 'Cundall called & sd he was going to begin the last 500 of the Nursery Songs'; 24 January 1844: 'In evg preparing 2nd Ed: of the Nursery Rhymes'.

111 Cole returned to the *Nursery songs* project in 1845, but discovered Cundall had lost the MSS. Cole Diaries, 25 July 1845. Undeterred, he started anew on 1 August, and on 25 August notes 'Revising proof of 2nd Ed: of Nursery Songs'.

112 [Henry Cole], *Traditional nursery songs of England*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Joseph Cundall, 1846). The title was also sold in a combined volume. *The Nursery Rhymes of England*, ed. J. O. Halliwell, 4th edn (John Russell Smith, 1846). It was advertised as an enlarged edition with 38 designs by W. B. Scott. John Bull, 20 December 1845, p. 822. The third edition of Halliwell's rhymes was issued in 1844.

113 For contemporary examples, such as *The sleeping beauty of the wood* (Glasgow: Printed for the booksellers, [1835-1849]), see *Small Books for the Common Man*, ed. Meriton, p. 252, no. 205.

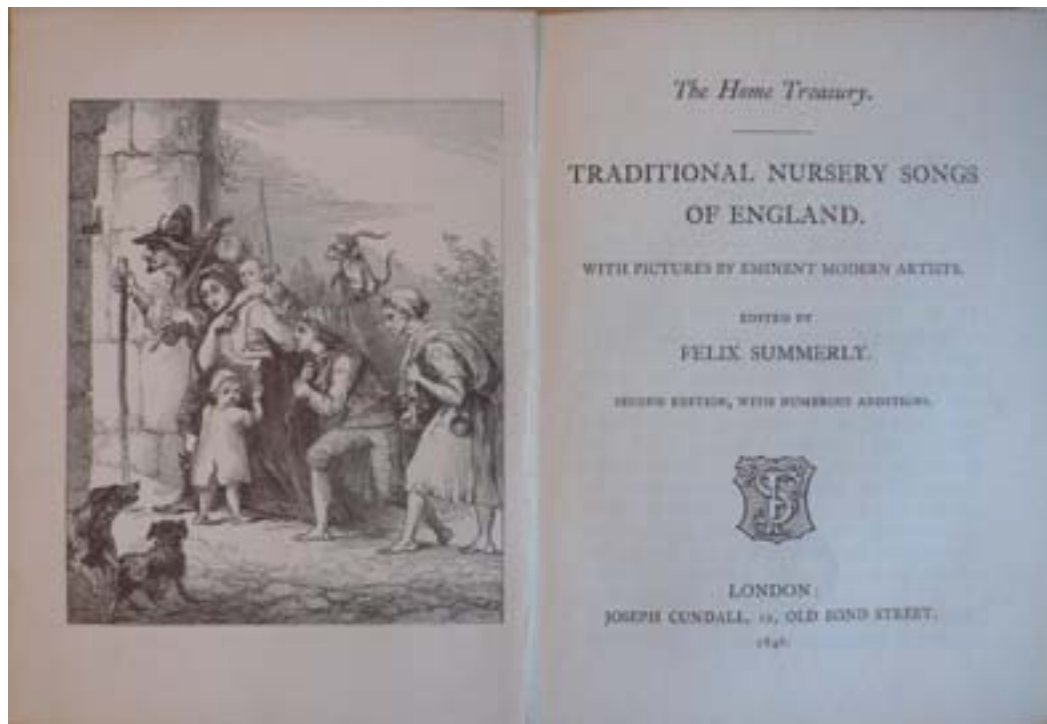


Fig. 4.32 *Traditional nursery songs. Part I* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), frontispiece illustration 'The beggar's are coming to town', by C. Cope, with title page. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.33 *Traditional nursery songs. Part II* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), 'Bye, O my baby!' with illustration by Richard Redgrave. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

library (Figs. 4.34-4.35).¹¹⁴

In the preface to *Little Red Riding Hood*, the first Home Treasury fairy tale, Cole offers some literary credentials for the story, naming his source as the 1698 double-titled edition of Perrault's tales in French, held at the British Museum: "Contes de ma Mère L'Oye" and "Histories ou Contes du Temps Passée".¹¹⁵ His intention to elevate the status of the tale is reinforced in his remarks on chapbook versions of the tale, which he claims were the only available English sources:

I have before me not less than five [one] *penny* editions of a very primitive sort, printed almost on brown paper; with wood cuts that might be taken as blocks belonging to Pfister of the fifteenth century, or any other wood engravings. The books are without date: but do not look more than fifty years old.¹¹⁶

It is interesting to compare Cole's rendition of the tale with two typical chapbook versions from the late eighteenth century (one published in London, the other in Dublin), to show how he adapts the tale for nursery use.¹¹⁷ The chapbooks adhere fairly closely to Perrault's original narrative structure with only minor differences in content and expression.¹¹⁸ In each version the text is accompanied by crude wood-cut illustrations (Figs. 4.36-4.37). Cole adds colour to the narrative, extending the tale to some sixteen pages by fleshing out details about the girl's life, and adding several pictures drawn by Webster to excite children's interest.

114 [Charles Cole], *Puck's reports to Oberon*, 2 vols (Joseph Cundall, 1844). The unnumbered volumes were marketed under the umbrella title; they share a title page but have different cover titles. The first volume, *The sisters and Golden locks*, contains the introduction 'Puck's report of the fairy Fancy's new tales for children', in which Cole positions the tales in the tradition of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The second volume is cover-titled *Grumble and Cheery*, and includes the tale 'The eagle's verdict'.

115 [Henry Cole], *Little Red Riding Hood* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), pp. 5-6.

116 *Ibid.*, p. 6. The first English translation of Perrault by Robert Samber was published in 1729 by J. Pote and R. Montagu in London. Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, p. 250. Albrecht Pfister set up the first printing press in Bamberg, and produced the first dated book printed from type, with illustrations. Percy Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books* (B. T. Batsford, 1971), p. 1.

117 The texts referred to are: [Charles Perrault, *Histories of tales of past times, told by Mother Goose* (Printed and sold by B. Collins; Carnan and Newbery; S. Crowder, 1772)], pp. 5-9. This example has the title-page missing and is catalogued according to Roscoe's entry for the sixth edition. V&A NAL EB.44. PERC.1772.CO (REN); *The choice gift, containing the story of Princess Fair-Star, and Prince Cherry and Cinderella; or, The little glass slipper, and Little Red Riding Hood* (Dublin: Printed by Wm. Jones, [1775-1799]), pp. 50-61, V&A NAL MB.CHOG.JO.JO. (REN).

118 For Samber's translation of Perrault (1729) see Jack Zipes, the *Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood*, ed. Jack Zipes, 2nd edn (Routledge, 1993), pp. 94-6.



Fig. 4.34 *Puck's reports. The sisters, and Golden Locks* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), frontispiece illustration 'Puck' by H. Townsend and title page. NAL 861.AA.4307 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.35 *Faery tales and ballads* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), illustration by H. Townsend, pp. 54-55. NAL 861.AA.0099 (Special Collections). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.36 'Little Red Riding Hood', in *The choice gift* (Wm. Jones, [1775-1779]), pp. 52-53. NAL MB.CHOG.JO.JO (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.37 'Little Red Riding-Hood', in Charles Perrault, *Histories or tales of past times*, 6th edn (B. Collins and others, [1772]), p. 5. NAL EN.44.PERC.1772.CO (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Cole locates the story in the New Forest in order to anglicise the tale fully, describing Little Red Riding Hood as the eight-year old daughter of an industrious couple living some time in the past. The girl is ‘useful and helpful to her parents’ (rising early to help her mother make breakfast, tidy, run errands, as well as learning to spin, mend clothes, and tend the garden); she is ‘a kind and thoughtful child’ (making presents for friends and visiting sick neighbours); she is ‘always light-hearted and happy’ (she likes to play).¹¹⁹ As in the Perrault version, Little Red Riding Hood is loved by her parents and doted on still more by the grandmother, who gives her the red hood. Cole suggests that her parents love her not because of her usefulness, but because ‘she was generally so very good and obedient’.¹²⁰ Little Red Riding Hood is thus presented as a domestic angel and paragon of virtue.¹²¹

Cole ascribes a more active role to the grandmother, who instructs her in useful skills and inculcates Christian values:

She taught her how to knit, to spin, to bake bread, and to make butter – how to sing, so that she might join in the music in the Church – how to be good natured, and kind, and charitable – how to be courageous and honest, and to speak the truth at all times – how to be grateful – how to love and worship God – and to pray for God’s blessing and providence.¹²²

By emphasising the value of a useful and charitable Christian life, Cole demonstrates that despite his criticism of evangelical children’s literature, he does not entirely reject all religious principles.¹²³ Cole shows the girl to be capable of recognizing her own mistakes and endeavouring to correct them: she reflects that ‘she was sometimes too fond of talking’; she acknowledges that ‘she had done wrong in telling the wolf anything’; she concludes that the best thing she could do would ‘be to hasten onwards as quickly as possible’.¹²⁴ Cole thus transforms Perrault’s indulgent girl (who lingers in the wood to gather nuts, run after butterflies and pick

¹¹⁹ Cole, *Little Red Riding Hood*, p. 9.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹²² Ibid., p. 11.

¹²³ Cole took his children to church. See Cole Diaries: ‘Church with Children’ on 9 March, 18 May, and 15 June, and 27 July 1845, for example.

¹²⁴ Cole, *Little Red Riding Hood*, p. 18.

flowers) into a self-regulating child, as envisaged by Fenn in *Cobwebs*, framed as the model Victorian girl.

Cole's portrayal of Red Riding Hood as a blameless rather than an erring child is typical of the post-Romantic emphasis on innocence rather than original sin.¹²⁵ Webster's frontispiece of the large wolf highlights Little Red Riding Hood's vulnerability and his four drawings show her as an innocent and pious young girl (Figs. 4.38-4.39). Significantly, although Cole gives the Perrault ending to the tale, in which the wolf devours both the grandmother and Little Red Riding Hood, he also offers a less violent alternative ending, in which the father rescues her.¹²⁶ This shows Cole reconciling his desire for authenticity in the tale and the need to create a suitable bedtime story for very young children. He does not offer a 'moral' at the end of the story (as do the chapbook versions of Perrault's tale); nevertheless, his advice is implicit in the commentary on Little Red Riding Hood's behaviour.

In *Little Red Riding Hood* Cole interrogates ideas about family values, social obligation and industriousness, and by showing Red Riding Hood being raised by a loving family, and protected by the wider community, he reconfigures the tale for a modern audience. Cole observes the effect of retellings in the preface to *Beauty and the beast*: 'Every age modifies the traditions it receives from its predecessor, and hands them down to succeeding ages in an altered form, rarely with advantage to the traditions themselves.'¹²⁷ By stating his intention to reject the 'moralizings' and the 'futile attempts to grind every thing as much as possible into dull logical probability'

125 The influence of Wordsworth on Cole's view of childhood is noted in a letter from W. A. Peacock, in which he refers to Cole imagining 'something poetical in a squalling brat notwithstanding the glutinous drop from his nasal promontory and the mouth variegated with bits of butter and treacle sticking out of reach of the wiping tongue'. Cole Correspondence, V&A NAL 55.BB 17/ Letter 66, June 1836. See also Avery-Quash, "'The Most Beautiful Books'", pp. 35-6, who notes that Cole had books by Coleridge and Shelley in his library. For the revival of the Romantic view of childhood in the Victorian period, see Judith Plotz, *Romanticism and the Vocation of Childhood* (Basingstoke and NY: Palgrave, 2001).

126 Cole's ending more closely resembles the Grimms' reworking of Perrault's tale, published in Germany in 1812 as Tale 6, *Little Red Cap*, in which Little Red Riding Hood and her grandmother are cut from the wolf's belly by a hunter. The English translation by Edward Taylor was published in 1824. See M. M. Grimm, *German popular stories: translated from the Kinder und haus märchen* (C. Baldwyn, 1823-1826). It is surprising that Cole does not acknowledge this version, merely claiming to have heard an alternative to the traditional ending 'in which poetical justice is done to the wolf' (p. 22), because he mentions the Grimms' translation of Perrault as his source for *Beauty and the beast*.

127 [Henry Cole], *Beauty and the beast* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), pp. iii-iv.

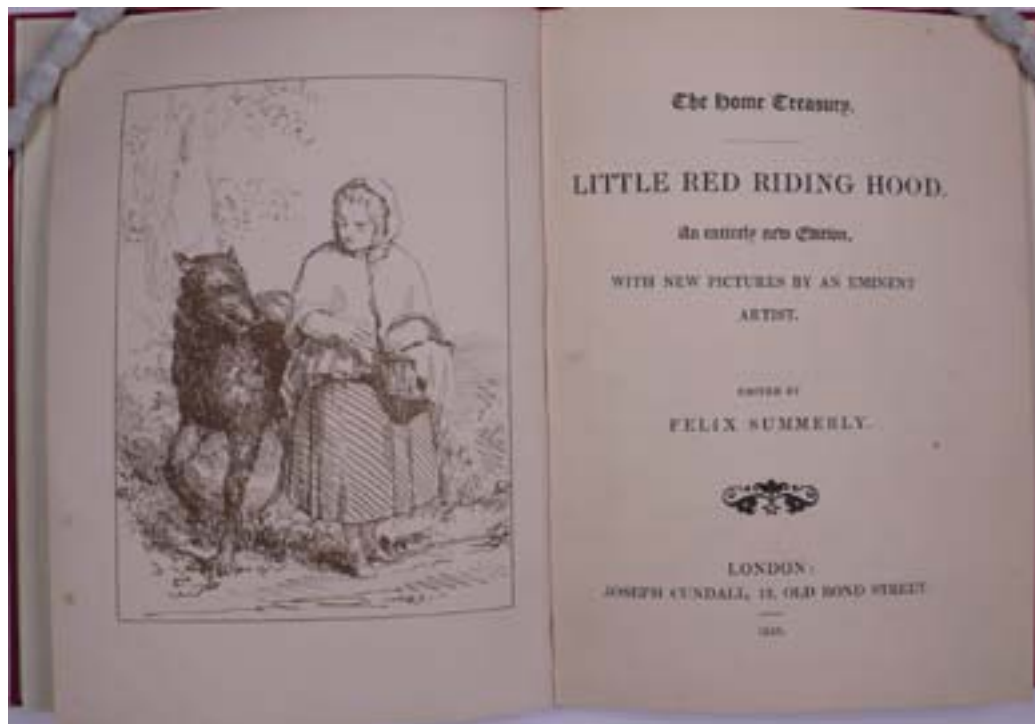


Fig. 4.38 *Little Red Riding Hood* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), frontispiece illustration by Thomas Webster and title page. NAL 60.X.125. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

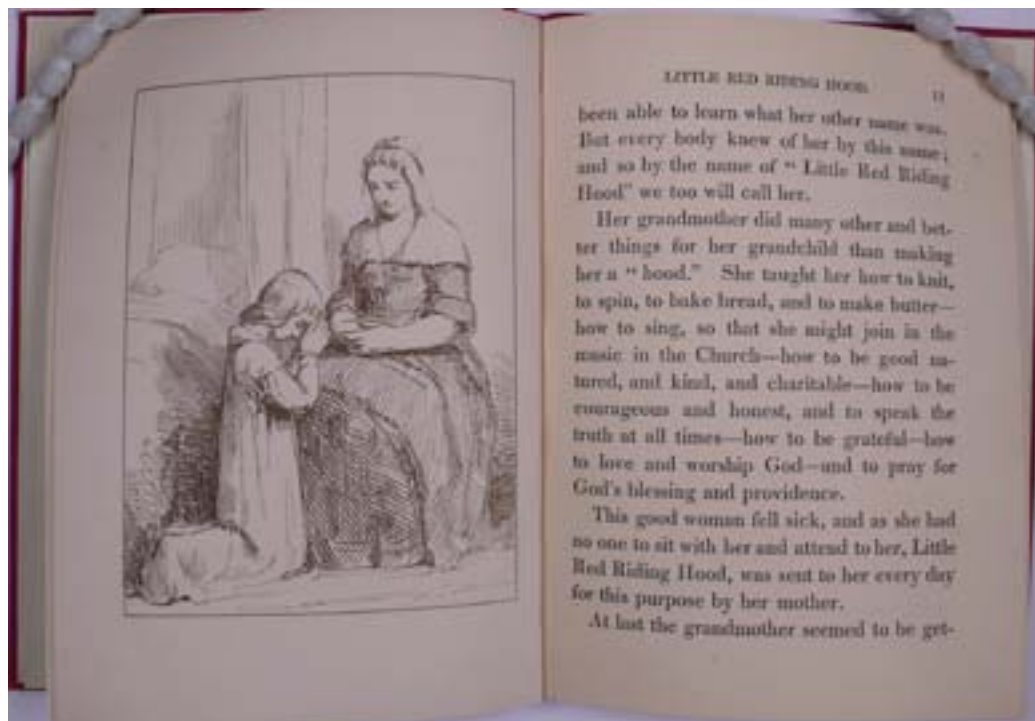


Fig. 4.39 *Little Red Riding Hood* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), pp. 10-11 with illustration by Thomas Webster. NAL 60.X.125. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

in order to please ‘Mrs Affable’, Cole distances himself from the prescriptive literature of the Evangelical writers.¹²⁸ However, although Cole states his intention to ‘re-write the legend more as a fairy tale than a lecture’, all the fairy tales in the Home Treasury have a strong moral underpinning that affirms Victorian attitudes to childhood and parenting. Like Little Red Riding Hood, Beauty is ‘beloved by all who were able to value her merits’, such as ‘charming modesty, kindness and frankness’.¹²⁹ Everyone loves the Princess Rosebud (Sleeping Beauty) because she is ‘virtuous, witty, graceful, beautiful’, but she is harmed when her parents become complacent about protecting her (Fig. 4.40).¹³⁰ Cinderella’s life is turned round because she heeds her dying mother’s advice to bear any evil and troubles with patience; her social guardian is ‘one of those good faeries who protect children’ (Fig. 4.41).¹³¹

The tales featuring boy heroes similarly show characters of good moral stature, that are selfless, brave and public-spirited.¹³² In *Jack and the beanstalk* the boy’s indolence is shown as the fault of his mother because of the ‘idleness in which she now indulged him’, but he reforms to become ‘a useful and good man’, who kills the giant (Fig. 4.42).¹³³ Jack the giant-killer emulates the great deeds of the brave Arthurian knights to gain the reward of ‘a cap of knowledge’, enabling him to

128 Ibid, p. iv. ‘Mrs Affable’ refers to the governess narrator in Madam Le Prince de Beaumont’s 1757 version of ‘Beauty and the Beast’ in *Le Magasin des Enfants* (translated as *The Young Misses Magazine*), in which the tale is related as a morally improving story for young ladies. *The Oxford Companion to Fairy Tales*, ed. Jack Zipes (Oxford, OUP, 2000), p. 47 and p. 294.

129 Cole, *Beauty and the beast*, p. 1.

130 [Henry Cole], *Rosebud, the sleeping beauty in the wood* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), p. 10.

131 [Henry Cole], *Cinderella, or The little glass slipper*. (Joseph Cundall, 1845), p. 10. For the view that Cole’s *Cinderella* represents the ‘most extreme’ of the nineteenth-century reinterpretations of the tale, with Absolon’s illustration portraying her as a ‘veritable Madonna praying by the fire’, see Bonnie Cullen, ‘For Whom the Shoe Fits: Cinderella in the Hands of Victorian Illustrators and Writers’, *The Lion and the Unicorn*, 27 (2003), 57-82 (pp. 66-8).

132 Cole’s exemplary characters were not inconsistent with his aim to provide entertaining, rather than moral literature, and reflect contemporary thinking. Mill and Tennyson, for example, believed that heroic legends educated children in the social ideal, and Charlotte Yonge hoped that her *Book of golden deeds* (1864) would encourage a spirit of heroism and self-devotion. See Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957; repr. 1971), pp. 316-17. It was more typical, however, for writers to use heroic figures to instil moral values in an overt manner. For example, in her introductory ‘Notice’ to *The new Jack the giant killer* (Houlston and Stoneman, 1842), Mrs Lamont avers that her book serves a higher purpose than ‘mere amusement’, having a moral purpose ‘to inspire children with the feelings and sentiments which should direct their actions when men’. Gillian Avery holds that Cole’s approach in the Home Treasury paved the way for fairy tales to be enjoyed purely for pleasure; see *Nineteenth Century Children*, p. 122.

133 Harriet Jackson (Harriet Mill), *The lively history of Jack and the beanstalk* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), pp. 5, 31.

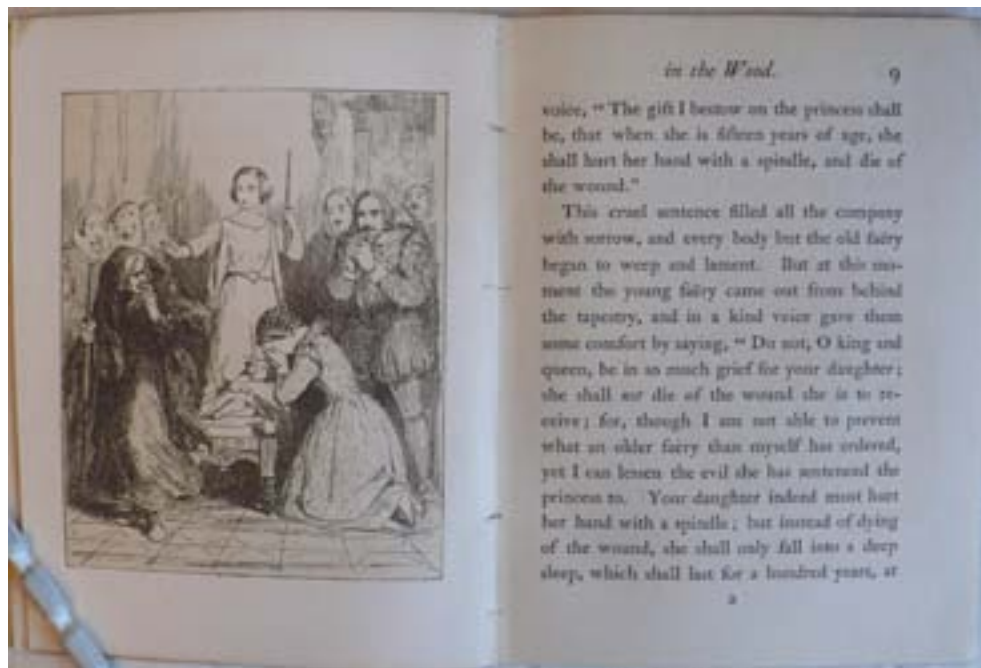


Fig. 4.40 *Rosebud, the sleeping beauty in the wood* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), pp. 8-9. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

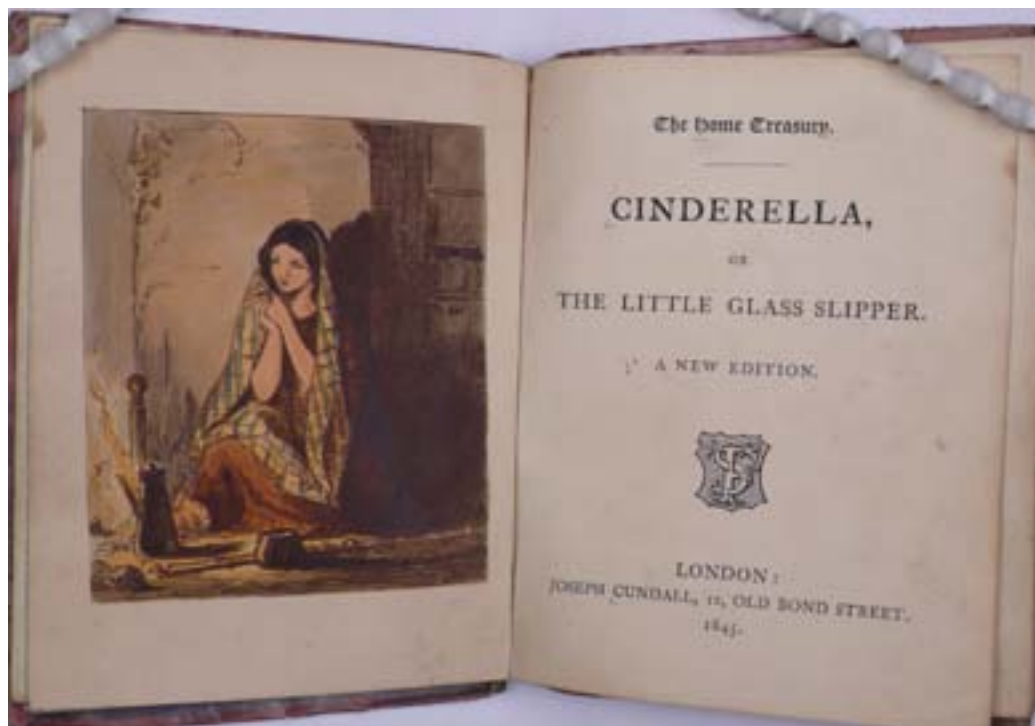


Fig. 4.41 *Cinderella* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), frontispiece illustration by E. H. Wehnert and title page. NAL 861.AA.3138 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

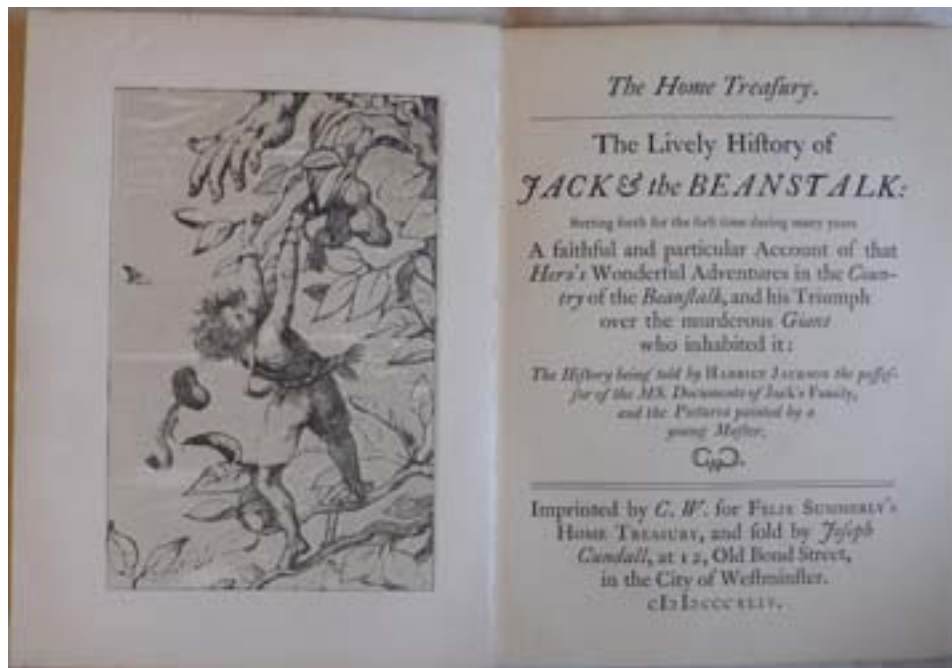


Fig. 4.42 Harriet Jackson, *Jack and the beanstalk* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), frontispiece illustration by C. Cope and title page. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

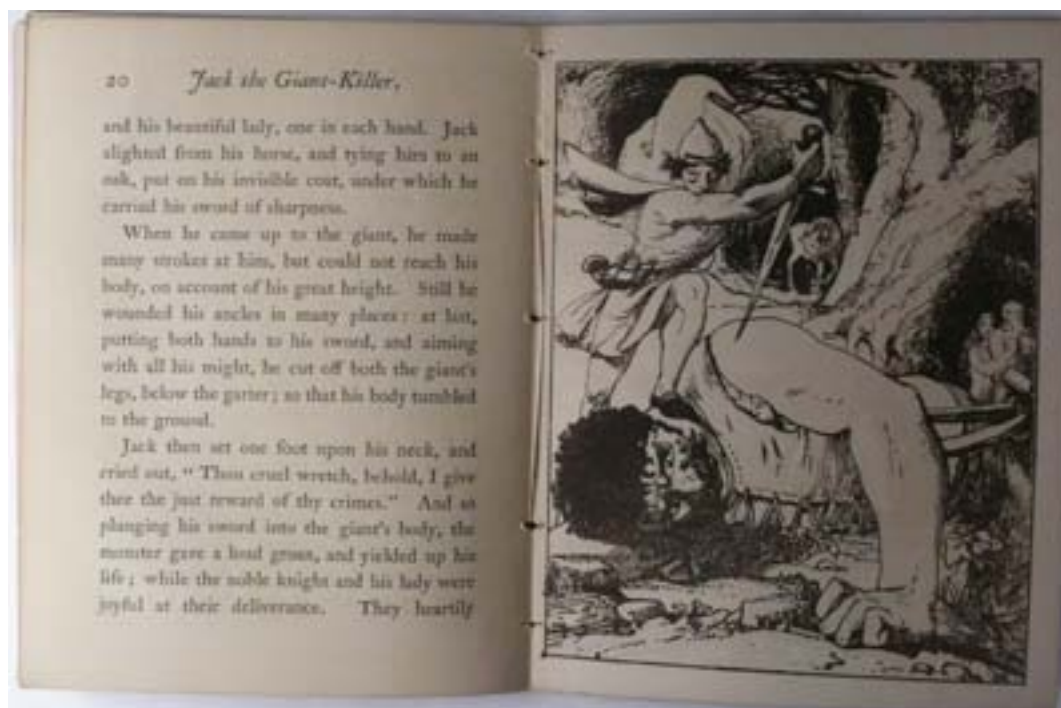


Fig. 4.43 *Jack the giant killer* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), pp. 20-21. NAL Forster 12mo 4166. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

become a ‘valiant hero’ who endeavours to do good for the community (Fig. 4.43).¹³⁴ Dick Whittington is a ‘dirty ragged boy’ saved by a ‘kind merchant’, who benefits from the ‘compassion’ of the gentleman’s footman (he ‘took the trouble to teach him to read’), and repays his good fortune by becoming a great philanthropist.¹³⁵ The Home Treasury tales thus promote the idea of the hard-working citizen, who is generous and socially responsible, rather like Cole himself.

Charles Cole’s new fairy tales similarly focus on issues that had relevance in Victorian Britain, such as class (including correct use of privilege and the obligation of the wealthy to the poor) and education (including the value of knowledge in a world in which the social order was changing). Equally pressing concerns about death, disease, loss of wealth and other misfortunes of everyday life are also explored. As in traditional fairy tales, binary themes emerge concerning luck and misfortune, good and evil, and happiness and discontent, which are overlaid with elements of magic. These newly invented tales predate the translation of Hans Christian Andersen’s tales into English by two years, and demonstrate Cole’s confident anticipation of revived interest in the fairy tale.

The ‘classics’ library

Alongside the nursery songs and fairy tales, the Home Treasury included a number of books designed to familiarise children with well-known classics and inspire a love of literature.¹³⁶ Fables, ancient myths, heroic songs, epic poetry and bible stories were added to provide longer stories for confident readers, creating a diverse miniature library for the nursery. Cole undoubtedly revived Thomas Love Peacock’s rhyming grammar book, first published by Sharpe and Hailes in 1814, as a tribute to the friend who had helped to cultivate his own love of literature as a young man.¹³⁷ Peacock’s medieval style ballad introduced the parts of speech as characters, and Cole believed that if children learned the rhyme by heart they would retain a better

¹³⁴ [Henry Cole], *The chronicle of the valiant feats, wonderful victories and bold adventures of Jack the giant killer* (Joseph Cundall, 1845), pp. 17-18.

¹³⁵ [Henry Cole], *The veritable history of Whittington and his cat* (Chapman and Hall, and Joseph Cundall, 1847), pages not numbered.

¹³⁶ Cole was not the first to adapt serious literature for children; Charles and Mary Lamb wrote *Tales from Shakespeare*, published in 1807.

¹³⁷ Thomas Love Peacock, *Sir Hornbook* (Joseph Cundall, 1843).

knowledge of English grammar than they could get from standard texts by Lindley Murray or Cobbett.¹³⁸

The original book, which featured hand-coloured lithographs of drawings by Henry Corbould (1787-1844), matched Cole's high ideals for the nursery books because of the eminence of the artist, and its literary credentials. Cole recreated the illustrations as fine wood engravings to bring them in line with the rest of the Home Treasury.¹³⁹ The improvement in picture reproduction is demonstrated in a comparison of the drawing of Sir Hornbook at the gates of his castle after summoning his 'merrymen' (the twenty-six letters of the alphabet) to guide Childe Launcelot in capturing the parts of speech (Figs. 4.44-4.45). Courbould's drawing for the 1814 edition is rather crudely reproduced and hand-coloured by children, giving no sense of texture, light or shade. The Home Treasury version, on the other hand, displayed as an elegant frontispiece, achieves more convincing form and heightened atmosphere through delicate shadow hatching, a subtler palette, and more delicate application of the watercolour by a professional artist – the shields appear to gleam in the sunlight, for example.¹⁴⁰

In the prefaces to the Home Treasury books Cole highlights their educational value, as well as their link with tradition. In *Delectable Reynard* (1846), for example, he indicates his approval of the moral framework of the stories by including the 'Epistle to the Reader' from the original story, which claims that the history 'beareth in it much excellent morality and hidden wisdom', and suggests that 'the aim at which it bendeth is the overthrow of vice, and the advancement of the good and virtuous' (Figs. 4.46-4.48).¹⁴¹ A further selection of fables from Aesop, Pilpay, Gay and La Fontaine was planned for *A century of fables*, although no copies of the book

138 Cole's observation appears in notes concerning Peacock's granting permission to reprint *Sir Hornbook*. Henry Cole, *Thomas Love Peacock: Biographical Notes from 1785-1862* ([s.n.], [1875?]), p. 28. When first published *Sir Hornbook* was very popular, being issued five times in five years, and its revival in the Home Treasury was successful. See 'Biographical Introduction', in *The Works of Thomas Love Peacock Volume One*, ed. H. F. B. Brett-Smith and C. E. Jones, 10 vols (London: Constable; NY: Gabriel Wells, 1934), p. lii-liii.

139 Cole Diaries, 26 February 1843: 'Tracing of Sir Hornbook &c.'.

140 *Sir Hornbook* was also issued with tinted monochrome engravings. See Chapter One (p. 49) for details of child colourists.

141 [Henry Cole], *The most delectable history of Reynard the Fox* (Joseph Cundall, 1846). This edition of the story of Reynard was a revised version of *Pleasant Reynard* (1843), designed for older readers.



Fig. 4.44 *Sir Hornbook* (Sharpe and Hailes, 1814), p. 6 illustration by H. Courbault. NAL 60.R. BOX II (xviii). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

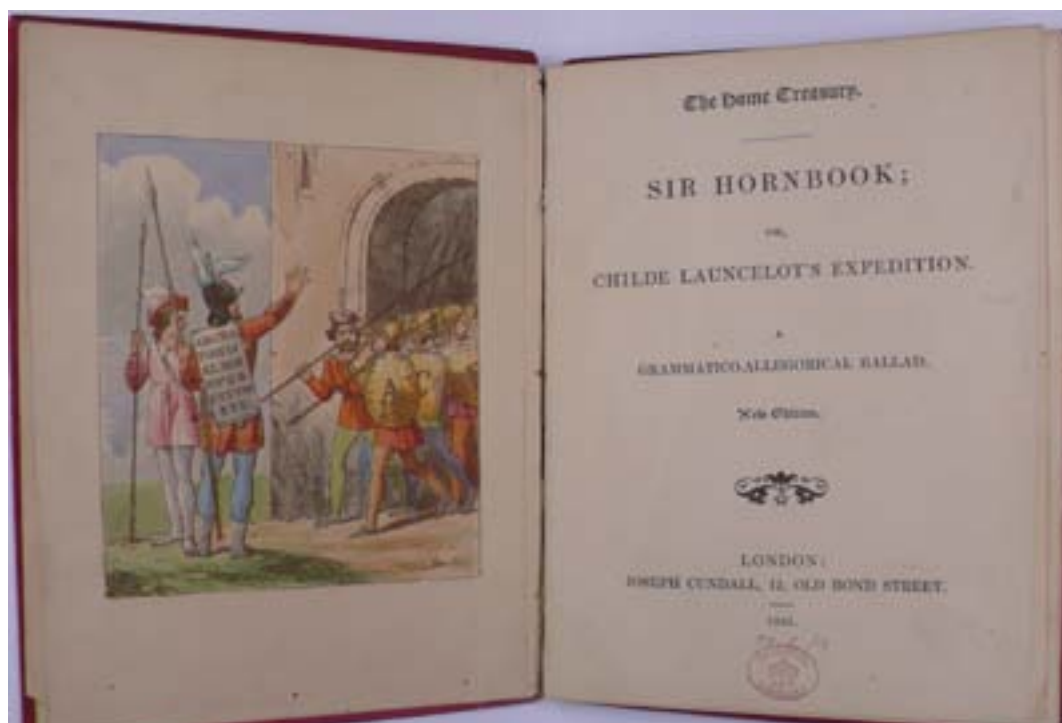
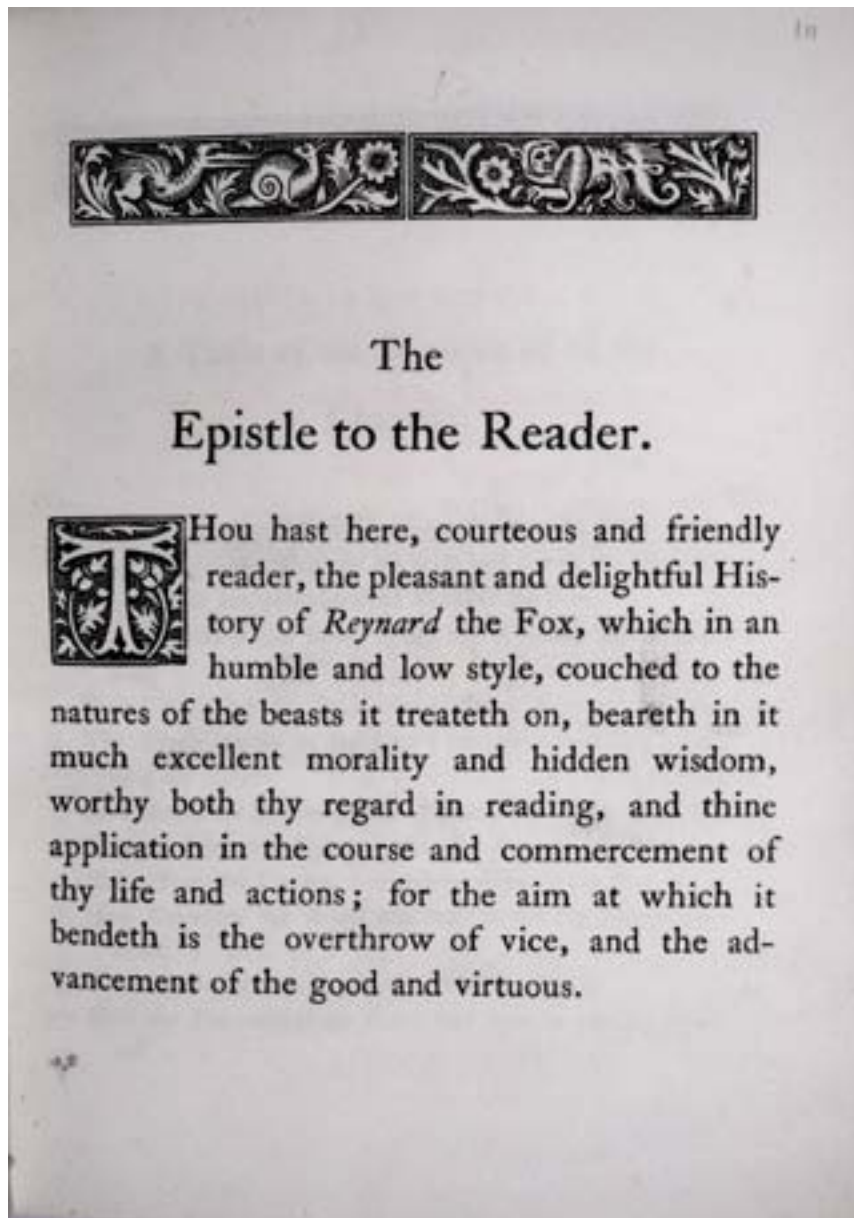


Fig. 4.45 *Sir Hornbook* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), frontispiece by H. Courbault and title page. NAL 60.X.10. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs. 4.46-4.48 *The most delectable history of Reynard the Fox* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), 'Epistle', frontispiece and p. 9 hand-coloured engravings after Everdingen. NAL 60.X.123. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



have been found.¹⁴²

Several of the titles were specially adapted for nursery use. For instance, in *Pleasant Reynard* (1843), Cole says that he has exercised some licence with the original arrangement of the pictures, to make them fit a story created for children, rewriting the ending of the traditional version to show ‘poetical justice’ being meted out to the deceitful fox, by having him hanged.¹⁴³ In *The ballads of Chevy Chase* Cole modernises the spelling in order to render them more intelligible to young readers, and includes a musical score so that the songs can be played on the family piano.¹⁴⁴ In *Tales from Spenser’s Faerie Queen*, which introduces children to the “‘Prince of Poets’”, Charles Cole explains that he has omitted ‘The Legend of Chastity’ because it is ‘composed of incidents unsuited to the mind of a Child’; he also drops the ‘Legend of Friendship’, judging the interweaving of the various narrative strands too complicated for a child to follow (Fig. 4.49).¹⁴⁵ Cole also made every effort to test the suitability of the adaptations for young children; for example, he read Niebuhr’s *Heroic tales* to his daughter and checked the accuracy of his translation (Fig. 4.50):

These tales have been found to have great charms for a child, and during their translation they were listened to with as wrapt (*sic*) attention as fairy tales by a little girl of five years of age, who had never before heard a word of ancient mythology.¹⁴⁶

142 Cole’s diary entry for 30 June 1844 shows him ‘E/xamin/g Fables’, but there are no further details to confirm publication. However, Cole includes *A century of fables* in the list of Home Treasury titles in *Fifty years of public work*, II, p. 162, and preserved an 1846 advertisement in *Miscellanies*, Vol 6, p. 259 (Fig. 4.26). It was also advertised in *The mother’s primer*.

143 Cole, *Pleasant Reynard* (1843), p. 5.

144 *The ancient and modern ballads of Chevy Chase* (Joseph Cundall, 1844). Cole includes a lengthy preface explaining the origins of the ballad, which had first been published by Thomas Percy (1729-1811) in *Reliques of ancient poetry* (1765). It is thought to be based on the Battle of Otterburn between the English and Scots in 1388.

145 [Charles Cole], ‘Preface’, *Tales from Spenser’s Faerie Queen* (Joseph Cundall, 1846).

146 *Heroic tales* (1844), pp. v-vi. Cole was prompted to translate the tales because of the ‘fitness for children’. To support his claim he prints an extract from an article on ‘Grecian legends’ praising the simplicity of the children’s version of Niebuhr’s original work on Roman history, written in German by the Danish scholar, which had appeared in the *Westminster Review*, signed ‘G. G.’, George Grote, author of a 12-volume history of Greece and regular contributor to the journal. See Joseph Hamburger, ‘Grote, George (1794-1871)’, *ODNB*. Cole notes in his diary 12 October 1843: ‘Evg Garnier came and we went through Niebuhr together’, showing that he had help with the translation for the *Heroic tales*.



Fig. 4.49 *Spenser's Faerie Queen*, ed. Charles Cole (Joseph Cundall, 1846), frontispiece by H. Townsend and title page. NAL 60.N.28 (LB). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

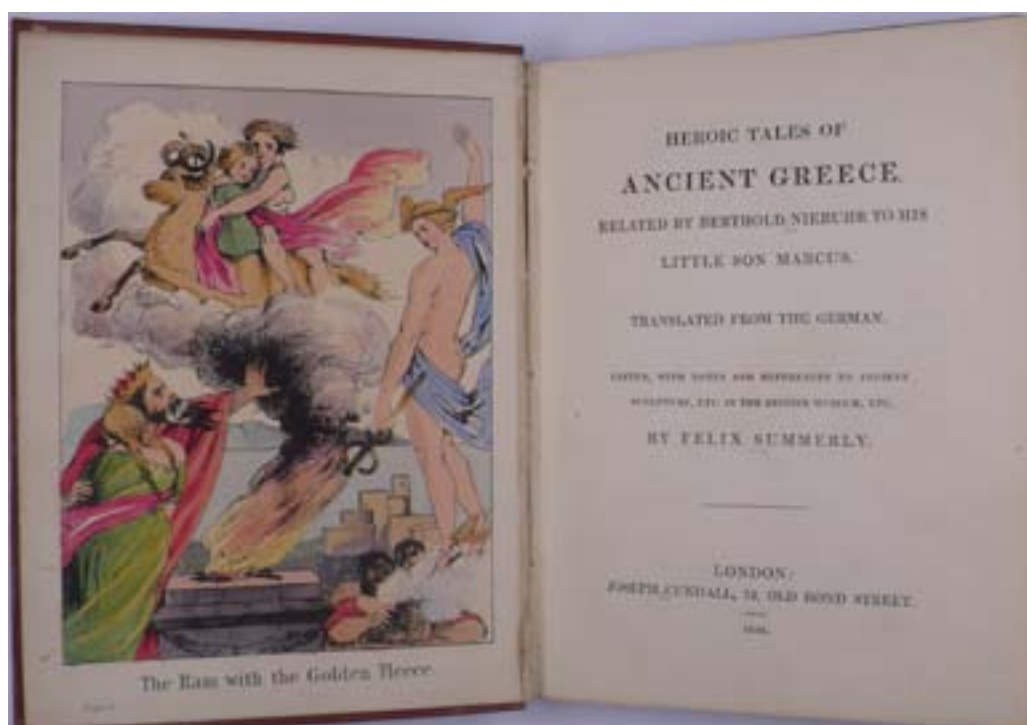


Fig. 4.50 *Heroic tales of Ancient Greece* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), hand-coloured frontispiece illustration by H. Townsend and title page. NAL 861.AA.0767 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Cole must have felt some disappointment that his plan to include the works of Wordsworth and Blake in the series had been thwarted.¹⁴⁷ Nevertheless, The Home Treasury thus featured a wide range of suitably adapted literary classics.

The four volumes of *Bible events* were designed to introduce children to religion through the pictures of Hans Holbein, Raphael, Dürer and Michaelangelo.¹⁴⁸ The accompanying stories were selected for their relevance to the subject of the pictures, rather than for doctrinal reasons, but would have provided suitable Sunday reading for Christian households. Each book carried a short exposition of the life and work of the featured artist, along with details of where their work might be viewed in public galleries, such as Hampton Court, the National Gallery, the Queen's Gallery at Buckingham Palace and the British Museum.¹⁴⁹ The Bible series attracted the only negative criticism of the Home Treasury. A reviewer in *The Examiner* thought that the 'plan' of first series of *Bible events* deserved 'every praise' for getting children 'accustomed to good art'; however, he judged that half of the stories were 'too peculiar a kind to recommend'.¹⁵⁰ The *Literary Gazette* similarly highlighted the 'exceedingly pretty volumes' of the Home Treasury, but considered *Bible events* 'too grotesque for sacred subjects'. These reviews suggest that the pictures and text Cole selected were considered unsuitably graphic in their depiction of bible scenes (Figs. 4.51-4.52).¹⁵¹

Notwithstanding such criticism, Cole's careful arrangement of illustration to create

147 See Cole Diaries. Cundall visited to discuss the Wordsworth project 16 April 1844; Cole called on Redgrave and Cope about the design on 18 April; however, Moxon refused his request to reprint on 19 April. Avery-Quash suggests James Burns beat Cole to the post in arranging copyright privilege for *Select pieces from the poems of William Wordsworth* (1843). See "'The Most Beautiful Books'", p. 15 (40 n.). Cole viewed Linnell's collection of Blake's drawings on 29 January 1843 with Dilke, Mulready, and R. Hill, and again with Dilke on 12 February. However, the idea was dropped when Mulready 'roundly & severely criticised Blake' (26 February).

148 *Bible events. First series* featured Holbein; [Henry Cole], *Bible events. Second series* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), featured Raffaele; *Bible events. The life of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), featured Dürer. *Bible events, fourth series*, containing six pictures from the Sistine Chapel after Michaelangelo, was listed in 1844 as being available in 'One Volume handsomely bound, 10s. 6d. plain. Splendidly bound, 21s. Coloured', but has not been seen. McLean, Cundall, p. 49. Marshall had used a similar concept, publishing *A series of prints of the Old Testament. Designed to accompany a book intitled, Scripture lessons. By Mrs Trimmer* (Printed and sold by John Marshall, [1797?]).

149 In his preface to *Heroic tales* (p. iv), Cole launched a campaign to relax the regulations at the British Museum, which excluded children under twelve from viewing the artworks that Neibuhr's son had viewed at the age of four in Rome.

150 *The Examiner*, 5 August 1843.

151 *Literary Gazette*, 1382 (July 1843), 463.



Fig. 4.51 *Bible events. First series* (Joseph Cundall, 1843), frontispiece illustration after Holbein and title page. NAL B.FD.BIBE.CU.1843 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

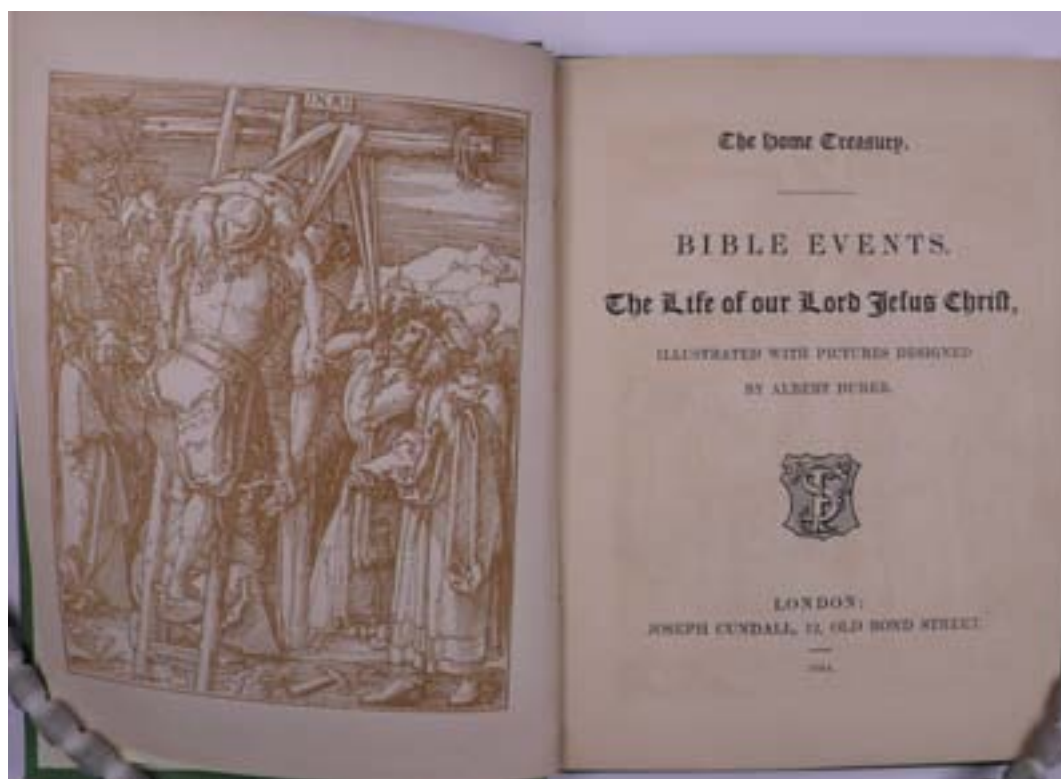


Fig. 4.52 *Bible events. Life of Christ* (Joseph Cundall, 1844), frontispiece drawing by Dürer and title page. NAL 60.X.126. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

a nursery gallery, his judicious selection of literary material and his conscientious adaptation of the texts reveal him as a highly effective children's editor, determined to create a suitable catalogue of nursery books. Cole shared Fenn's view that nursery books should be designed so that they could be read aloud to children, or to provide a suitable text as they learned to read for themselves. Although fathers were encouraged to become involved in their children's early education, Cole understood that typical domestic arrangements made it more likely that a mother would have greater involvement in teaching children to read, and the addition of *Mother's primer* as a supplement to the series was designed to meet this need.

The mother's primer

It is likely that Marian Cole suggested the idea for *Mother's primer*; McLean and Judith St John even contend that she may have been the guiding force for the whole Home Treasury series.¹⁵² Written under the pseudonym 'Mrs Felix Summerly', the attractive, colour-printed, twenty-six-page booklet, which sold for just one shilling, offers a simple guide to early education.¹⁵³ The extensive range of nursery activities introduced in the primer underpins Marian Cole's belief that '[l]earning to read should not be made exclusively the first part of a child's education'.¹⁵⁴ Exercises in observation, an introduction to poetry and rhyme, as well as very simple reading lessons, prepare the child for reading other books in the series.

Having four children under the age of five at the time *Mother's primer* was being prepared, Marian Cole was able to offer first-hand advice on early education.¹⁵⁵ 'My experience with children is that learning to read may be a pleasant instead of

152 McLean, *Cundall*, p. 52. See Judith St John's essay accompanying the facsimile edition: 'Mr Felix Summerly and his Series', in [Marian Cole] Mrs Felix Summerly, *The mother's primer* (Toronto, Friends of the Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections, Toronto Public Library, 1970), 29-32 (p. 32). Cole's diary shows Marian Cole was involved in the series, occasionally accompanying him on visits to Cundall, the Chiswick Press, and various illustrators, some of whom, like Mulready, became close family friends. It is possible that the Coles co-wrote the primer, as diary entries show Cole working on the primer from late February 1844 through to the end of April either 'at Primer' or 'revising Primer'; the entry for 17 March specifies 'at [...] preface to Primer'.

153 For pricing, see classified advertisement in *The Morning Chronicle*, 27 July 1844, p. 8.

154 M. Cole, *Mother's primer*, p. 2.

155 See note 4 for details of Marian Cole's children. Before marriage she had been employed as a governess, so probably had prior experience of teaching children to read. See Cooper, 'Cole, Sir Henry (1808-1882)', *ODNB*.

a painful task', she assures readers.¹⁵⁶ Great importance is attached to the mother's involvement in her child's development; however, Marian Cole is critical of the practice of nursery hot-housing: 'I am far from wishing to bring the mind forward too early; on the contrary, I think the practice very hurtful.'¹⁵⁷

Marian Cole suggests that a child absorbs knowledge before any formal teaching takes place, and that pre-reading skills acquired through play are a vital step in the learning process:

Long before a child begins reading, his mind may be kept in healthful employment in various pleasant ways: he may amuse himself with putting bricks together, drawing lines, and even large printing letters on a black board or slate: sorting shells into little parcels, &c.: learning the names of objects, their uses; stringing buttons or flowers: learning to distinguish and name the commonest colours.¹⁵⁸

Practical exercises – including distinguishing voices to encourage appreciation of musical sounds, and gathering flowers to learn about shades of colour – encourage playful learning.¹⁵⁹ Marian Cole's promotion of the value of play is synchronous with the teaching of Froebel, and reflects the continuing influence of the ideas of Locke and Rousseau.¹⁶⁰

Repeating 'easy Nursery Songs and poetry' and learning them 'by heart', is suggested as a valuable activity.¹⁶¹ Marian Cole includes three poems from Anne and Jane Taylor's *Rhymes for the nursery* (1807), a book that she notes as 'a general and great favourite with children'.¹⁶² In a journal recording her fifth daughter's acquisition of language up to the age of three, she notes that Isabella 'distinguished

¹⁵⁶ M. Cole, *Mother's primer*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 20.

¹⁶⁰ See Chapter One for the influence of Locke and Rousseau on Fenn's pedagogy. In the intervening years, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) had developed Rousseau's theories and influenced a new generation of teachers, including Froebel, to value practical experience in children's education.

¹⁶¹ M. Cole, *Mother's primer*, pp. 3, 23.

¹⁶² 'Mamma and the baby', 'Good night' and 'Getting up' are included from the Taylors' book, which was still in print in a revised edition published by Harvey and Darton in 1841. It is curious that Marian Cole does not promote the Home Treasury *Nursery songs*; however, she does recommend Cole's *First exercises* as an extension to her lesson on colour (p. 20), and the *Tesselated pastime* to teach geometric shapes (p. 19).

one tense from another very early', and that rhymes were important to her baby's speech development and early communication:

When she was not more than 17 months old – she used to ask for bor-bor – (boys and girls come out to play). She first began to sing the tune of “Three little kittens.” Then “Bo peep” – & by singing the tunes she used to show me the book she wished to look at.¹⁶³

It is evident from Marian Cole's own parenting experience that she viewed nursery verse as a valuable means to promote children's aural absorption of vocabulary and syntax, before any formal teaching.

Although the lessons are scripted, they are intended purely as a guide ('the arrangement of pages may be followed or not', p. 2), and the mother is encouraged to adapt the lessons to suit her child's capacity ('parts may be omitted or modified', p. 2). The exercises are short ('five minutes is quite long enough at the beginning', p. 22), are designed to fit in with a mother's schedule ('When convenient [...]', p. 17) and a child should be 'especially encouraged to ask questions' (p. 3). Marian Cole thus provides a model of a mother who is conscientious in meeting her responsibility for her children's education, but sensitive to their emotional needs.¹⁶⁴

It is interesting to observe how closely her pedagogy matches that of Ellenor Fenn in *Spelling book*. She disapproves of formal teaching methods that emphasise learning the alphabet and spelling out syllables ('ba be bo'), which might result in a 'distaste for learning to read, before any reading in fact has begun'.¹⁶⁵ All the lessons are to be done without spelling, to avoid 'the cost of many tears'.¹⁶⁶ She also recommends helping a child to 'begin reading at once' by giving her 'short

163 Marian Cole [later Lady Cole], 'The sayings of Isabella Langdale Cole when an infant, recorded by her mother' (1852-1853), London, V&A NAL MS 86.HH Box III (Special Collections), fol. 4. Isabella b. 12 August 1850.

164 For the development of Victorian domestic ideology, see “‘The Nursery of Virtue’: Domestic Ideology and the Middle Class”, in Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes*, rev. edn (London and NY: Routledge, 2002), 149-92. The authors note that in the 1830s and 1840s, the idea of 'professional motherhood' became 'more clearly articulated' (p. 175).

165 M. Cole, *Mother's primer*, p. 4.

166 *Ibid.*, pp. 6, 2.

easy sentences, even before learning the alphabet perfectly'.¹⁶⁷ Active learning is encouraged, such as touching objects named in the text: 'Tell me *what* you see in the room. I see a *door*, a *stool*, a *lock*, a *key*, a *clock*, a *dish*, a *spoon*, and a *plate*.'¹⁶⁸ Marian Cole's emphasis on visual cues and active learning anticipates the teaching method promoted in *The golden primer* (1884-5) (see Chapter Five).

The text is printed in Caslon Old Face, a well-spaced serif type, making it easy to read, and the novel colour printing is effectively employed to excite interest and aid reading on every page of the book.¹⁶⁹ For example, it is used to distinguish the upper and lower-case letters in the alphabet (p. 5), to help with writing exercises and to highlight words and sentences in reading lessons (Figs. 4.53-4.54).¹⁷⁰ Decorative embellishments – such the patterned frame on the title-page, letter ornaments, headpieces and borders – link *Mother's primer* in style with the other Home Treasury titles (Fig. 4.56).¹⁷¹ *The Critic* was suitably impressed with the 'attractive manner' in which the book was printed, and recommended it to anyone wishing to 'lessen the trouble and pain which the innocent prattlers are often unnecessarily condemned to undergo in mastering the mysteries of reading'.¹⁷² The colourful modern primer was accepted for the Royal nursery.¹⁷³

The two frontispiece illustrations for *Mother's primer*, engraved in zinc after drawings by Mulready, reinforce Cole's promotion of home education in the Home Treasury series, showing a mother and father closely supervising their children's early learning and play (Fig. 4.55).¹⁷⁴ In one picture the father pores over an open book, while his son (aged around seven) sits at his side practising his writing at a portable table-top writing desk; the mother is seated beside them listening to her

167 M. Cole, *Mother's primer*, p. 4. See Chapter Two for Fenn's advocacy of early reading of simple texts.

168 Ibid., p. 14.

169 Avery-Quash identifies the type in "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", II, fig. 101.

170 M. Cole, *Mother's primer*, pp. 5, 15.

171 Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", II, fig. 70.

172 *Critic of Literature, Art, Science and the Drama*, 1:1, August 1844, p. 74.

173 Cole's diary entry for 5 September 1844 shows he called on Mulready to discuss the 'Queen's copy of Primer'.

174 Mulready, who had started his early career illustrating for Harris and others (see Chapter Three) was by this time highly regarded for his narrative paintings of childhood; for example 'Train up a Child in the Way he Should Go' (1841). See Pointon, 'Mulready, William', *ODNB*.

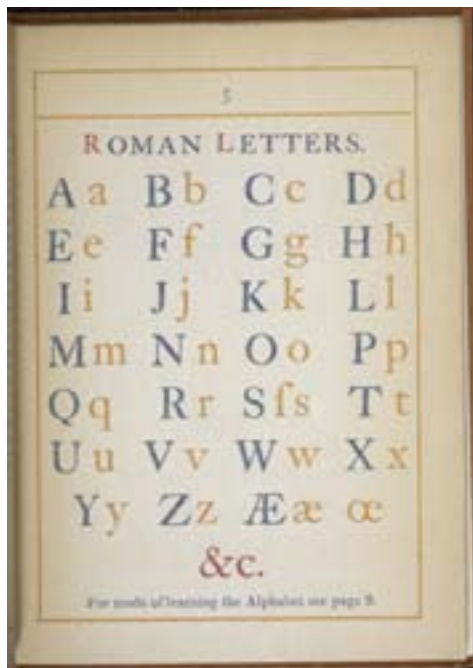


Fig. 4.53 *The mother's primer* (Longman, 1844), 'Roman letters', p. 5. © British Library Board 1210.e.49.

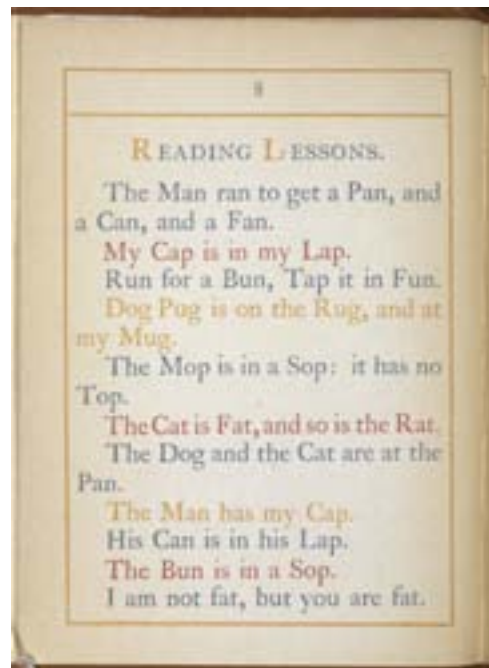


Fig. 4.54 *The mother's primer* (Longman, 1844), 'Reading lessons', p. 8. © British Library Board 1210.e.49.



Fig. 4.55 *The mother's primer* (Longman, 1844), frontispiece by William Mulready. © British Library Board 1210.e.49.



Fig. 4.56 *The mother's primer* (Longman, 1844), title page with fleuron border. © British Library Board 1210.e.49.

daughter (aged around four) read; and a child of around two shows her baby sibling how to play with toys. The picture displays a relaxed atmosphere of learning, though the presence of books, a globe and a classical statue clearly indicates a teaching environment. The second picture, set in the countryside, shows the parents watching their children wheel each other in a barrow, the family dog bounding along behind them. These are idealised images of Victorian parenting that suggest the satisfaction of parents involved in their children's education and recreation, but are consistent with the real life experience of the Cole family.¹⁷⁵ Marian Cole's infant curriculum in *Mother's primer*, which promoted visual pre-reading skills, as well as inculcating aesthetic awareness through exercises in pattern and colour, was perfectly tailored to support Cole's visually oriented pedagogy in the Home Treasury.

The impact of the Home Treasury

The Home Treasury found a receptive market; within two years of its launch new compilations and revised editions were already in preparation. In addition to the enlarged two-volume *Nursery songs* (1846), the traditional fairy tales were sold in new gift compilations with colour-printed illustrations.¹⁷⁶ The two volumes of modern fairy tales were reissued separately as well as bound in a single volume that included *The ballads of Chevy Chase* and *Sir Hornbook*.¹⁷⁷ A new edition of the Bible stories was also issued, including pictures from the first three series.¹⁷⁸ The books were now marketed in a 'Shilling' Series' (a halving of price to make them more competitive), or in the 'Bound Series' advertised at between 2s. 6d., for the cheapest plain copy, and 7s. 6d. for the more expensive coloured editions, depending on the number of pictures in the book (Fig. 4.57).¹⁷⁹ However, despite the continuing popularity of the venture, Cundall's precarious financial situation resulted in the Home Treasury being sold to Chapman and Hall in 1846.

175 A portrait of the Cole family, 'Evenings at Home' (1852-3), by George Smith, shows the children reading and playing in the drawing room, supervised by Henry and Marian. The picture (in a private collection) is reproduced as figure 25 in the central pages of Bonython and Burton, *The Great Exhibitor*.


176 [Henry Cole], *The traditional faëry tales* (Joseph Cundall, 1845); [Henry Cole] *The popular faëry tales of Jack the Giant Killer, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty* (Joseph Cundall, 1846).

177 *Faery tales and ballads* (Joseph Cundall, 1846).

178 *Events in sacred history* (Joseph Cundall, 1845).

179 See the advertisement in *Spenser's Faerie Queen* (1846). In 1846 Cundall also reissued Home Treasury titles in what Avery-Quash describes as 'sub-Holbein' cover designs. See "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", II, Figs. 38a-c, 39.

Felix Summerly's
of Books and Pic
cultivate the Affec
gination, and Taste



Home Treasury
tures, purposed to
tions, Fancy, Ima-
of Children.

Shilling Series.

1. **J**ACK the Giant Killer. With 4 Pictures by Townshend.
2. Little Red Riding-Hood. With 4 Pictures by Webster.
3. Sleeping Beauty in the Wood. With 4 Pictures by Absolon.
4. Beauty and the Beast. With 4 Pictures by Horsley.
5. Jack and the Bean Stalk. With 4 Pictures by Cope.
6. Cinderella. With 4 Pictures by Absolon.
7. The Ballads of Chevy Chase. With 4 Pictures by F. Tayler.
8. Sir Hornbook. A Ballad. With 4 Pictures by H. Corbould.
9. The Sisters, and Golden Locks. With 3 Pictures, by Redgrave, &c.
10. Grumble and Cheery. With 3 Pictures by Cope, &c.
11. The Life of Christ. With 4 Pictures by Albert Durer.
12. Bible Events. First Series. With 8 Pictures by Holbein.
13. Bible Events. Second Series. With 6 Pictures by Raffaele.

Each of these Books is handsomely done up in a gold-paper cover,
price 1s. or with coloured Plates, 2s. 6d.

Bound Series.

1. The Traditional Nursery Songs of England.
With 4 Pictures by Eminent Artists. Price 2s. 6d., coloured 3s. 6d.
2. Tales from the Faerie Queen.
With 4 Pictures by Townshend. Price 3s. 6d., coloured 4s. 6d.
3. The Delectable History of Reynard the Fox.
With 24 Pictures by Everdingen. Price 4s. 6d., coloured 7s. 6d.
4. An Alphabet of Quadrupeds.
With 24 Pictures from the Old Masters. 4s. 6d., coloured 7s. 6d.
5. Tales of the Heroes of Greece.
With 4 Pictures by Townshend. Price 3s. 6d., coloured 4s. 6d.
6. Faery Tales and Ballads.
With 14 Pictures by Eminent Artists. 4s. 6d., coloured 7s. 6d.
7. Traditional Faery Tales.
With 12 Pictures by Eminent Artists. 3s. 6d., coloured 5s. 6d.
8. Popular Faery Tales.
With 12 Pictures by Eminent Artists. 3s. 6d., coloured 5s. 6d.
9. Summerly's Sacred History.
With 18 Pictures by Albert Durer, &c. 4s. 6d., coloured 7s. 6d.

Fig. 4.57 Advertisement for the Home Treasury, in *Tales from Spenser's Faery Queen*, ed. C. Cole (Joseph Cundall, 1846). NAL 60.N.28 (LB). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The new publishers immediately issued a compilation gift book for Christmas 1846 and revamped the series.¹⁸⁰ The colour-printed book *Whittington and his cat*, published in association with Cundall in 1847, was the last title issued in the original decorated paper wrappers before the firm changed the series cover later the same year, reducing the price of all titles to 1s. plain and 1s. 6d. coloured (Figs. 4.58-4.59).¹⁸¹ A copy of *Whittington and his cat* demonstrates the more sober binding, which Chapman and Hall retained for their subsequent reissues of the series in 1853 and 1855 (Fig. 4.60). The buff paper wrappers feature a black printed cameo illustration of a family of six listening attentively as their father reads from a book, a design that was intended to make the series appear more educational.¹⁸² Interestingly, two copies of the 1855 edition of *Sir Hornbook* in the Renier Collection in the V&A NAL have gilded floral paper wrappers, and may represent the prototype for a more lively binding under consideration.¹⁸³ Chapman and Hall appear to have dropped the more expensive ‘art’ books from the series, such as the two *Reynard* titles and *Alphabet of quadrupeds*, as they are not shown in advertising lists (Fig. 4.61). However, these titles were remaindered; for example, an edition of *Alphabet of quadrupeds* with a new binding was published in 1849 by Henry George Bohn in London, probably marketed in his ‘Illustrated’ series launched the same year.¹⁸⁴

The influence of Cole’s promotion of art and design in the Home Treasury was wide ranging.¹⁸⁵ Cundall created the Gammer Gurton Story Books, a cheaper ‘Sixpenny Series’ of fairy tales and legends issued with similar decorative covers, which he advertised alongside the Home Treasury series (Fig. 4.62).¹⁸⁶ Before acquiring the Home Treasury, Chapman and Hall produced a series called ‘Picture story books

180 See advertisement in *The Times*, 17 December 1846, p. 10.

181 Cole’s diary entry for 19 October 1846 shows the title was in preparation before the sale.

182 See, for example, [Thomas Love Peacock], *Sir Hornbook* (Chapman and Hall, 1855). A reissue of the 1847 edition, with new drawings engraved by the acclaimed Dalziel brothers. The lower cover advertisement lists fairy tales and ballads at sixpence plain, or one shilling coloured.

183 See pressmarks V&A NAL 861.AA.4563 (REN) and 861.AA.4564 (REN).

184 Bohn built his business on the remainder trade, specializing in serious works at low prices. See Alexis Weedon, ‘Bohn, Henry George (1796-1884)’, *ODNB*.

185 For the influence of Cole’s Home Treasury see Chapter 6, ‘Children’s Books up to 1850’, in McLean, *Victorian Book Design*, pp. 47-63, and Avery-Quash, ‘“Creating a Taste for Beauty”’, I, pp. 180-1.

186 Cundall advertised the two series together. See full-page advertisement in *Spenser’s Faerie Queen* (1846). The Gammer Gurton series was edited by William J. Thoms, using the pseudonym Ambrose Merton. Summerfield notes: ‘Between them Cole and Thoms effectively rehabilitated much of the repertoire of the chapbooks, and with Halliwell resuscitated a great range of nursery rhymes’; see Summerfield, ‘Making of the Home Treasury’, p. 47.



Figs. 4.58-4.59 *Whittington and his cat* (Chapman & Hall, 1847), cover and colour printed frontispiece engraved by G. Dalziel after J. Absolon. NAL B.FC.WHIT.CH (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

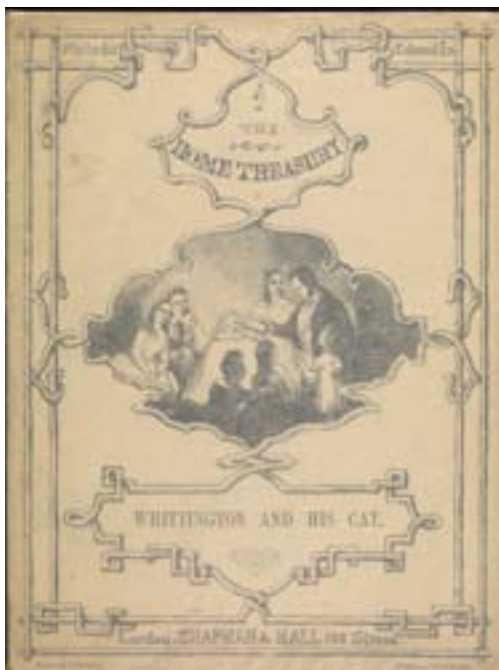


Fig. 4.60 *Whittington and his cat* (Chapman & Hall, 1847). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Opie C 1236. Front cover.



Fig. 4.61 *Whittington and his cat* (Chapman & Hall, 1847). Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Opie C 1236. Back cover with advertisement.



Fig. 4.62 *Gammer Gurton's garland* (Joseph Cundall, [c. 1845]), cover. NAL 60.X.128. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.63 *Faery tales and ballads* (Joseph Cundall, 1846), title page with colour printed lettering. NAL 801.AA.0099 (Special Collections). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

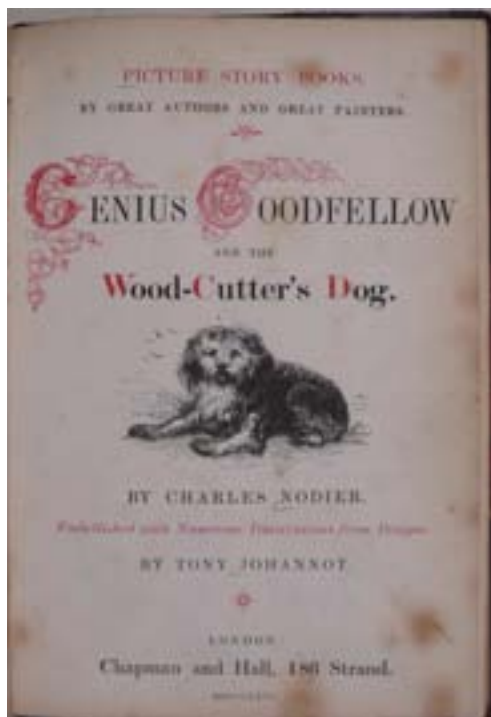


Fig. 4.64 *Genius Goodfellow and the wood-cutter's dog* (Chapman and Hall, 1846), title page. NAL 861.AA.4716 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 4.65 *The Home Treasury of old story books* (Samson and Lowe, 1859), cover. NAL 60.X.122. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

by great authors and great painters', using the red and black printed type used in some Home Treasury books (Figs. 4.63-4.64).¹⁸⁷ James Burns created rival series of illustrated nursery rhymes and fairy tales, *Nursery rhymes, tales and jingles* (1844) – for which he shamelessly recruited two of the Home Treasury illustrators – and *The book of nursery tales. A keepsake for the young* (1845), a three-volume series marketed as a cheaper alternative to Cole's tales.¹⁸⁸ Ward, Lock, & Tyler also jumped on the bandwagon in 1869 with a book of nursery rhymes and stories illustrated by 'eminent modern artists'.¹⁸⁹ Cundall published *A treasury of pleasure books for young children* (1850), in association with Grant and Griffith (successors to the Harris firm), which included illustrations by John Absolon and Harrison Weir, and a revival *Old Mother Hubbard and her dog*.¹⁹⁰ The title was also published in different form by Sampson, Low, who highlighted its illustration with 'eminent pictures'.¹⁹¹ By now, partly as a result of Cole's efforts, it had become commonplace for publishers to make illustration by prominent artists a key selling point in children's books.

There were also more reissues. In 1859, Sampson, Low also published the Home Treasury fairy tales in a sumptuously bound gift compilation entitled *The home treasury of old story books. Illustrated with fifty engravings by eminent artists* (Fig. 4.65).¹⁹² In 1895 Macmillan issued *The most delectable history of Reynard*

187 For an example of the series see Charles Nodier, *Genius Goodfellow and the wood-cutter's dog* (Chapman and Hall, 1846).

188 James Burns (1808-1871) converted to Rome in 1844, but was previously associated with the publication of Anglican tracts. See Thomas Meehan, 'James Burns', *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Vol 3 (NY: Robert Appleton Company, 1908). *Nursery rhymes, tales and jingles* (James Burns, 1844). In his 'Advertisement', Burns attempts to excuse the similarity of his books with 'recent collections of Nursery Rhymes as illustrated works'. He also admits to poaching Cope and Horsley in his 'Advertisement' for *Nursery rhymes, tales and jingles*, 2nd edn (James Burns, 1846). In *The book of nursery tales. A keepsake for the young. Second series*. (James Burns, 1845), pp. v-vi, Burns explains that he had used as much ornament and illustration as possible without making the book too expensive, and urges customers 'desirous of procuring these tales in a more illustrated and expensive form' to buy the Home Treasury versions.

189 *Old nursery songs, stories and ballads: with numerous illustrations by eminent modern artists* (London: Ward, Lock & Tyler [1869]).

190 *A treasury of pleasure books for young children. With more than one hundred illustrations by John Absolon and Harrison Weir* (Grant & Griffith and Joseph Cundall, 1850).

191 *A treasury of pleasure books for young people, illustrated with one hundred and forty pictures by eminent artists* (Sampson, Low, Son, & Co., [ca 1850]).

192 *The home treasury of old story books. Illustrated with fifty engravings by eminent artists* (Sampson Low, Son, and Co, 1859). The volume also included *The ballad of Chevy Chase*, alongside material from 'Old Story Books of England' (Cundall's 'Gammer Gurton' series).

the Fox, reviving Cole's 1846 text.¹⁹³ Acknowledging Cole's contribution to the literary history of the fable, its editor Joseph Jacobs recalled the 'well printed, well written, and tolerably illustrated' Home Treasury books 'as the chief treasures of our youth', and offered his own book as 'a resuscitation of "Felix Summerley's" (sic) version'.¹⁹⁴ Such comments serve as a testimony to the lasting influence of the Home Treasury books.

The fond memories that the Home Treasury instilled in child readers is evident in a reminiscence of Thackeray's daughter Annie, as she recalled her joy at receiving a parcel of the books sent by her father:

One of the nicest things that ever happened to us when we were children at Paris was the arrival of a huge parcel, [which] my Grannie cut open and inside there were piles & piles of the most beautiful delightful wonderful fairy tale books all painted with pictures – I thought they would never come to an end but alas! in a week we had read them all.¹⁹⁵

It is impossible to judge whether Cole's aim to create 'a taste for beauty in little children' succeeded, but Annie Thackeray's effusive comment demonstrates the excitement aroused by the colourful books.¹⁹⁶ Marginalia of child readers also attests to their enjoyment of the books.¹⁹⁷

Cole undeniably anticipated a desire for better-produced children's books that would stimulate children's interest in reading. In her 1844 *Quarterly Review* article Elizabeth Rigby had called for reform in children's book publishing, suggesting that the only effectual way to check 'the torrent of dressed-up trumpery which is now

193 *The most delectable history of Reynard the Fox*, ed. Joseph Jacobs (London and NY: Macmillan and Co., 1895).

194 *Ibid.*, p. iii.

195 Manuscript reminiscence from 1878 of Anne Ritchie, Lady Ritchie (1837-1919) addressed to her niece Laura Stephen (daughter of Harriet Thackeray (1840-1875), 'Minny'). Cited in Gordon N. Ray, *Thackeray: The Uses of Adversity (1811-1846)* (OUP, 1955), p. 304, (482 n.). Anne Thackeray ('Anny') was seven when she read the books. Cole met William Thackeray in the 1830s, and Anny became friends with Cole's daughters when she and her sister Minny came to London to live with their father in 1846. See Bonython, *King Cole*, pp. 28-9.

196 'Original Announcement' for the Home Treasury, in *Nursery songs* 1843.

197 For example, see the shaky pencil note written by the proud owner of *Spenser's Faerie Queen* (1846): 'this is Mr Lewes book and Mrs Lewes book and I like it very much so does my sister'. Lower pastedown, V&A NAL 60.N.28.

poured upon the public' would be to assist in 'raising the standard of *art* itself'.¹⁹⁸ Her views match those of Cole entirely when she observed:

The real secret of a child's book consists not merely in its being less dry and less difficult, but more rich in interest – more true to nature – more exquisite in art – more abundant in every quality that replies to childhood's keener and fresher perceptions.¹⁹⁹

The short-lived success of the original Home Treasury series can largely be attributed to Cundall and Cole's dwindling interest in the project. The arrangement for Longman's to publish the *Mother's primer* in 1844 was probably the first indication that Cundall's business was not running smoothly.²⁰⁰ There is no indication of Cundall falling out with Cole, and he was later to acknowledge him as his 'earliest and kindest instructor on all questions of art'.²⁰¹ Cole was also involved in new projects that would eventually culminate in his orchestration of the Great Exhibition, and probably felt that his work for the Home Treasury was complete. He had designed and manufactured a tea-set (with the help of his friend Thomas Minton, manufacturer of the toy bricks), which was judged a winning entry for the Grand Annual Exhibition of Manufactures in 1846, and this encouraged him to launch Felix Summerly's Art Manufactures, a catalogue of elegant but affordable domestic items intended to promote public taste, which he commissioned from top artists (many Home Treasury illustrators) and leading manufacturers. One such item was a porcelain vase manufactured by Minton and painted by Linnell, which featured a drawing from the Home Treasury *Reynard* illustrations, another was a child's porcelain mug featuring one of Webster's drawings from *Little Red Riding Hood* (Figs.

¹⁹⁸ Rigby, *Quarterly Review*, 74 (1844), p. 25.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁰⁰ See Cole Diaries. Cundall offered his share of the Home Treasury to Longman's on 25 September 1844, and asked Cole to buy him out on 9 October 1844. Cundall needed to raise cash to provide for his family; he was declared bankrupt in 1849. See McLean, *Cundall*, p. 16 and p. 22.

²⁰¹ Dedication to Cole in Joseph Cundall, *On Bookbindings Ancient and Modern* (G. Bell and Sons, 1881).

4.66-4.67).²⁰² This commercialisation of characters from nursery books would be more fully exploited later in the Victorian period.

Summary

Cole's prospectus for nursery education, outlined in his launch manifesto and the prefatory material in the books, shows the Home Treasury to have had a much more clearly defined objective than Harris's Cabinet of Instruction and Amusement. Like Ellenor Fenn, Cole developed a well-planned series in order to communicate his educational philosophy and effect a change in attitudes towards children's early education. The marketing strategy for the books and toys was designed to undermine the influence of moral and rational writers such as Goodrich and, even though the Home Treasury did not achieve the high sales of the 'Peter Parley' books, it succeeded in challenging their dominance of the children's market. Cole's modern adaptations of traditional fairy tales and his publication of the first English tales demonstrate his timely anticipation of demand for new imaginative literature taken from historical sources.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that Cole's Home Treasury was an immensely influential series that helped to change attitudes to children's publishing in three distinct areas: it revived interest in nursery songs and fairy tales, helping to establish them as a permanent feature of nursery reading; it brought the pictures of eminent artists into the domain of children's literature, elevating the status of illustrators and encouraging aesthetic appreciation alongside early reading; and its high-class printing and production raised standards in the design of children's books.²⁰³

The innovative colour illustration and design work in the Home Treasury undoubtedly represent the most significant legacy of Cole's ambitious publishing project. In a manuscript note on the endpaper of Cole's own copy of the second edition of *Nursery songs*, which he bequeathed to the South Kensington Museum in 1880,

202 Bone china vase (h. 15.5 cm), 'Reynard summoned to court', painted by John Linnell after drawings by Everdingen, Felix Summerly's Art manufactures, Minton & Co., Stoke-on-Trent, [ca. 1847], V&A 378-1854 (CER). Porcelain mug (h. 7.9 cm), Little Red Riding Hood, 'Meeting the wolf', painted by Thomas Webster, Felix Summerly's Art Manufactures, Minton & Co., Stoke on Trent, [ca. 1847]. V&A 374-1854 (CER). See also Avery-Quash, "'Creating a Taste for Beauty'", Vol II, Figs. 142, 143.

203 Darton observes the declining interest in 'useful knowledge', and the moral tale. Darton, pp. 249-50.



Fig. 4.66 Porcelain mug [ca.1847] decorated with a design by Thomas Webster from *Little Red Riding Hood* (1843) 'Meeting the wolf' (h.7.9 cm), produced by Minton & Co. for Felix Summerly's Art Manufacturers. V&A 374-1854 (CER). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

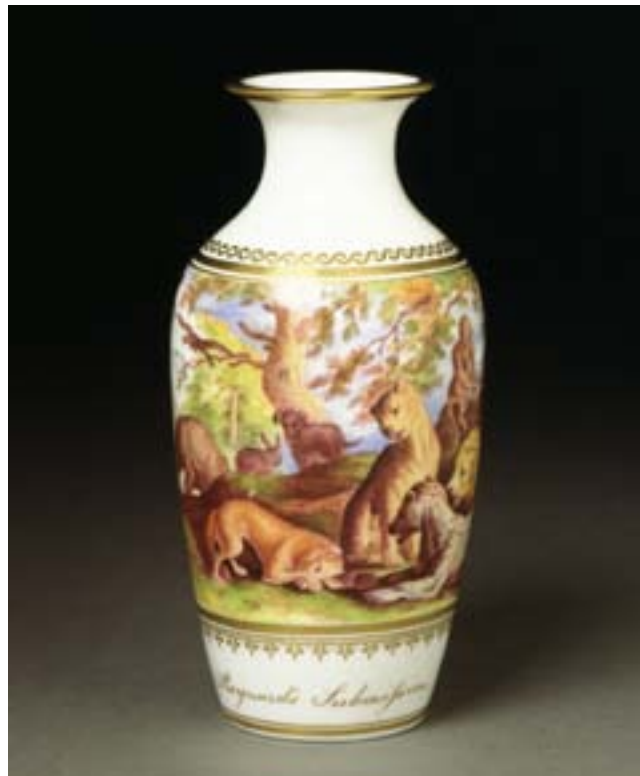


Fig. 4.67 Bone china vase (1847) decorated with an image from *Pleasant Reynard* (1843) 'Reynard summoned to court' by John Linnell (h.15.5 cm), produced by Minton & Co. for Felix Summerly's Art Manufacturers. V&A 378-1854 (CER). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

he proudly remarks:

One object of the Home Treasury series [...] was to place good pictures before my own and other children. Cope, Horsely [sic], R. Redgrave, Webster, Mulready, all Royal Academicians with Linnell, Townsend and other artists, made designs in lithographic work which were coloured by hand. This process was costly and each tale had to be published at 4s. in 1840 – whilst in forty years afterwards works by Walter Crane with excellent designs were sold at about one tenth the price. After the first edition of the Nursery songs an edition was produced by means of coloured woodblocks but with inferior results. A comparison of the two processes in works by Redgrave, Cope & Horsley in this volume will show this inferiority.²⁰⁴

By using artists and craftsmen to create and hand-tint the Home Treasury books Cole vastly improved the standard of coloured illustrations set by John Harris earlier in the century, and his experiments with colour printing from wood paved the way for the next generation of children's book creators. As Cole lived to witness, the work of the illustrator Walter Crane, under the direction of the highly skilled printer Edmund Evans, would make quality illustration and design a more affordable and popular feature of children's books. Crane's development of colour picture book reading for the nursery in the mid- to late Victorian period provides the focus of the next chapter.

204 Inscription dated 16 January 1880, in *Traditional nursery songs of England*, 2nd edn. (Joseph Cundall, 1846). Unique binding, incorporating *Alphabet of quadrupeds* V&A NAL 55.CC.9 (Special Collections) (currently 'not in place'). A similar note (also dated 16 January 1880) was added to the specially bound volume of *Traditional faëry tales* (Cundall, 1845), and *Popular faëry tales* (Cundall, 1846) that Cole offered to the Queen for the Royal Library at Windsor. See Avery-Quash, "'Cultivating a Taste for Beauty'". II, Fig. 208. Avery-Quash feels Cole's judgement was harsh, as the woodblock versions show high quality and great delicacy and it was this process that came to be widely used in colour printing of children's books. See "'The Most Beautiful Books'" p. 26.

CHAPTER FIVE

Walter Crane and the decorative art of reading

[C]hildren can learn definite ideas from good pictures long before they can read or write, and much could be done educationally in this way.¹

The painter, designer and decorative artist Walter Crane (1845-1915) was one of the most prolific, popular and influential children's book creators of his generation. During his long career he designed, illustrated and wrote more than 60 of his own colour picture books, as well as illustrating the children's works of authors such as Mary Louisa Molesworth and Oscar Wilde.² Although there is no evidence to suggest that Crane ever met Henry Cole, or that he was influenced by the Home Treasury series, the young artist proved to be Cole's natural successor in the promotion of quality art and design in children's publishing. In this chapter I focus on Crane's pioneering use of art and design as an aid to literacy, and suggest that he was one of the most significant figures in the development of picturebooks, bringing good design to mass-market nursery readers.

Like Cole, Crane thought children's books were the ideal medium for cultivating aesthetic awareness in young children, but he also recognised that good pictures and design could stimulate interest in reading and help children to learn from a very early age. 'Every child takes in more through his eyes than his ears', he observed.³ Crane understood the importance of visual cues in reading, and believed that every feature of the book – including the cover, titles, type, illustration, page layout, end papers and other design features – had an interconnected role in facilitating a child's engagement with the text and the enjoyment of reading. In his 1889 Cantor lectures,

1 Crane, Walter, 'Notes on My Own Books for Children', *The Imprint*, 1: 2 (1913), 81-6, (p. 85). (Hereafter, *Imprint*)

2 Crane illustrated 17 books by Mary Louisa Molesworth [Mrs Molesworth] (1839-1921), published by Macmillan and Co. between 1875-1893. Crane illustrated *The happy prince and other tales* (1888) for Oscar Wilde (1854-1900). Crane's bookwork includes illustrated literary works for adults, such as *The Story of the Glittering Plain*, published by William Morris in 1891, and a lavish six-volume edition of Spenser's *Faerie Queen*, published in 1894. For a comprehensive list of Crane's publications see Isobel Spencer, *Walter Crane* (NY: Macmillan Publishing, 1975), pp. 200-4.

3 Walter Crane, *Cantor lectures on the Decoration and Illustration of Books* (Printed by W. Trownce, 1889), p. 26. Lecture III, delivered 18 March, 1889.

delivered to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, Crane stressed the lasting effect of early pictorial and literary impressions and made a strong plea for ‘good art in the nursery and schoolroom’.⁴

Crane was a great innovator and reformer, who implemented developments in four key areas of children’s reading. First, he radically improved the standard of ‘toy books’, the cheap, mass-market colour picture books bound in paper wrappers that featured nursery rhymes, fairy tales, modern stories, as well as alphabets and other educational titles. Second, Crane designed the first baby books, creating an innovative series of musical rhymes and fables that opened parents’ eyes to the idea of picture books for very young children. Third, he devised a novel set of fantasy stories that challenged conventional methods of teaching reading, writing and arithmetic, promoting the idea that children could learn elementary skills through imaginative play. Lastly, Crane helped to develop two pioneering reading schemes that took picturebook reading into schools.

Crane’s colourful, well-designed picturebooks caused a sensation when they were first published, and were lauded by contemporary art critics and the press, earning his reputation as ‘The Academician of the Nursery’, a title bestowed by the Hungarian art critic Paul G. Konody (1872-1933) in his 1902 monograph.⁵ However, as Anne Lundin’s extensive research into the reception of Crane’s books demonstrates, critical response not only bolstered the artist’s reputation, but helped to perpetuate misconceptions about his work.⁶ Although art historians have continued to maintain Crane’s reputation, influential children’s literature historians, such as Darton in the 1930s, Muir in the 1960s and Alderson in the 1980s, have largely failed to recognise the ground-breaking nature of Crane’s work, labelling his style

4 Walter Crane, *Cantor Lectures*, p. 26.

5 P. G. Konody, *The Art of Walter Crane* (G. Bell & Sons, 1902), p. 29. The art critic Gleeson White had similarly referred to Crane in 1897 as the ‘apostle of art for the nursery’, and in his study of English illustration published in the same year, proclaimed the artist’s toy books to be ‘masterpieces’. Gleeson White, ‘Children’s Books and their Illustrators’, *The Studio Special Winter Number* (1897-98), 3-68 (p. 32), and Gleeson White, *English Illustration ‘The Sixties’* (1897; Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1970), p. 129.

6 Anne Lundin, *Victorian Horizons* (Lanham, MD, & London: The Children’s Literature Association and The Scarecrow Press, 2001).

of illustration and ornament as purely decorative.⁷ Only recently have scholars begun to offer new perspectives on the artist's children's books; Tomoko Masaki's study of the Routledge picturebooks shows how Crane created a new artistic form, and John Hutton explores Crane's use of architectural symbolism.⁸ It is my aim in this chapter, therefore, to highlight the theory that underpins Crane's book designs, in order to demonstrate that the decorative features and design techniques the artist employed served an educational function, creating a revolutionary effect on nursery reading at home and in the school classroom.⁹

Crane's commercial success enabled other talented illustrators to follow in his wake, most notably two other protégés of the printer Edmund Evans (1826-1905), Randolph Caldecott (1846-1886) and Kate Greenaway (1846-1901), who are often given equal credit for the development of the modern picture book.¹⁰ However, as I will argue, Crane's many innovations, and his unique understanding of the educational value of art and design in early reading, sets him apart from other illustrators and shows him to be the most significant children's artist in the development of the nursery market in the mid- to late Victorian period.¹¹

7 For art history perspectives with biographical details see: Spencer, *Walter Crane* (1975); Helen Stalker, *From Toy Books to Bloody Sunday: Tales from the Walter Crane Archive* (Manchester: Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester, 2009); Helen Stalker, 'Sleeping Beauties: Walter Crane and the Illustrated Book', *The IBIS Journal 3: Diverse Talents* (The Imaginative Book Illustration Society, 2009), pp. 7-51. Darton, p. 278, asserts that Crane 'was the minister, almost the slave, of a doctrine of decorative arts and crafts'. Percy Muir decries 'the over-elaboration' of some of Crane's designs, in *English Children's Books*, p. 186. Muir later conceded that Crane's design and illustration work played an important part in the development of a 'new field' of coloured children's books, and that his 'elaborate' baby books were 'especially successful'; see Percy Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books*, pp. 159, 164. Alderson considers Crane to be too heavily committed to decoration; see his *Sing a Song for Sixpence* (Cambridge: CUP in association with BL, 1986), pp. 75-9. Even Maurice Sendak, who judges that Crane's decorations are 'beautiful' and his embellishments 'spellbinding', fails to appreciate their purpose. See 'A dialogue with Maurice Sendak', in *Victorian Colour Picture Books*, ed. Jonathan Cott (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Books; NY: The Stonehill Publishing and Chelsea House Publishers, 1984), ix- xxi (p. xi).

8 Tomoko Masaki, 'A History of the Toy Book: The Aesthetic, Creative, and Technological Aspects of Victorian Popular Picture Books Through the Publications of the Firm of Routledge 1852-1893', 3 vols (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Surrey Roehampton, 2000), published as *A History of Victorian Popular Picture Books*, 2 vols (Tokyo: Kazamashobo, 2006). John Hutton, 'Walter Crane and the Decorative Illustration of Books', *Children's Literature*, 38 (2010), 27-43.

9 For an earlier exposition of this research see Lesley Delaney, *Walter Crane: Promoting Visual Literacy in Nursery Picture Books*, Occasional Paper IX (Buckfast: Children's Books History Society, 2011).

10 Lundin notes the negative effect on Crane's reputation through being linked with Caldecott and Greenaway. *Victorian Horizons*, p.100.

11 The period is referred to as the 'golden age' of book illustration by Gordon N. Ray, *The Illustrator and the Book in England*, p. xiii. The period 1860-1880 is referred to as 'probably the best ever for British book illustration' in Whalley and Chester, *A History of Children's Book Illustration*, p. 75.

Childhood and early art education

Crane's childhood experiences offer an interesting insight into how his ideas about early education were formed, and why he became so passionate about good design in children's books. Although born in Liverpool, he was brought up in Torquay where he gained a love of the Devon sea-side and landscape that is reflected in his toy book art.¹² For example, the opening picture for *The fairy ship* (1870) shows a young boy gazing out to sea and imagining a magical boat (Fig. 5.1).¹³ Crane received very little formal schooling, being judged too sensitive to cope with the rigours of the typical Victorian schoolroom, and was mainly taught by his mother and a governess at home.¹⁴ Many of his toy books promote the idea of a mother encouraging early learning, for example, the centre spread for *My mother* (1873), in which the children enjoy a lesson with pictures (Fig. 5.2).¹⁵

Crane learned to draw from a very early age by observing and imitating his painter father Thomas Crane (1808-1859) at work, and gained an appreciation of painting, architecture and fine art by poring over the art books kept in his father's studio.¹⁶ He believed that the Albert Dürer woodcuts he discovered in the *Art Journal* had 'an unconscious effect' on his 'future tendencies and style', and says his imagination was fired by the romantic and dramatic illustrations to Scott's novels.¹⁷ He was also impressed 'beyond words' by Millais's atmospheric painting, 'Sir Isumbras at the Ford', which he viewed at the 1857 Royal Academy exhibition shortly after the

12 Crane recalls '[...] from one source or another, no doubt one was gathering the elements of ideas, some of which were destined to be developed further in later life'; Walter Crane, *An Artist's Reminiscences* (London: Methuen, 1907), p. 27.

13 [Walter Crane], *The fairy ship* (George Routledge & Sons, [1870]).

14 Crane was invalided out of school with 'congestion of the brain' from burdensome homework. He suggests his horror of school may have derived from reading Dickens's account of Wackford Squeers's punitive schoolhouse in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9). Crane, *Reminiscences*, pp. 31-2. Crane was brought up by 'ordinary low-church tenets' and recalls that Sunday reading for the family consisted mainly of books published by the Religious Tract Society. A governess, who was an ardent Evangelical, supervised formal lessons. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

15 [Walter Crane], *My mother* (George Routledge & Sons, [1873]).

16 Crane recalls, 'I got a good deal of instruction under my father's eye', but learned in an 'unsystematic' way. Crane, *Reminiscences*, pp. 40, 14. Thomas Crane had a reputation as a portrait artist and miniaturist, and also painted landscapes. He was a member of the Liverpool Academy, and also exhibited at the Royal Academy. Albert Nicholson, 'Crane, Thomas (1808-1859)', rev. Mary Guyatt, *ODNB*.

17 Crane, *Reminiscences*, pp. 14-15.



Fig. 5.1 Crane, *The fairy ship* (Routledge & Sons, [1870]), pp. 1-2. NAL 60.W.299. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.2 Crane, *My mother* (Routledge & Sons, [1873]), centre opening. NAL B.LB.ROUT.MY.1873 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Crane family moved to London.¹⁸ As well as visiting art galleries and museums in the city, he went on sketching trips to practise what he had learned from studying John Ruskin's recently published *Elements of Drawing* (1857).¹⁹ Growing up in this stimulating artistic environment shaped Crane's ideas about the value of studying pictures, and fostered an understanding of how aesthetic sensibility could be encouraged in children's early education.²⁰

At the age of thirteen Crane's father secured him an apprenticeship with W. J. Linton (1812-1897), one of the top wood-engravers in the country, to prepare him for a career as a book illustrator.²¹ Linton had been impressed by a set of illustrations that Crane had created for Tennyson's 'Lady of Shalott', which showed the boy's flair for design. The art critic John Ruskin (1819-1900) was also shown the drawings and commended Crane's use of colour.²² Following the sudden death of Thomas Crane in 1859, Linton became something of a father figure to his young apprentice.²³ As a writer, poet and champion of political freedom in the Chartist movement, Linton introduced Crane to a wide range of literary and artistic influences and sowed the seeds of his later freethinking.²⁴ Under Linton's tutelage Crane became familiar with the work of artists such as William Blake (1757-1827), as well as a number of leading contemporary illustrators, including John Gilbert (1817-1897), John Tenniel (1820-1914), Charles Keene (1823-1891), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-1882) and Frederick Sandys (1829-1904).²⁵ He also met his hero Ruskin at Linton's office.²⁶

18 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 38. 'A dream of the past: Sir Isumbras at the Ford' (1857), by John Everett Millais (1829-1896). Crane also recalls his excitement at seeing the painting, which shows a medieval knight on horseback carrying two peasant children across a swollen river, in Walter Crane, 'The Work of Walter Crane with Notes by the Artist', *The Art Journal Easter Art Annual* (J. S. Virtue & Co., 1898), 1-32 (p. 1). (Hereafter, *Easter Art Annual*)

19 Ibid., p. 1.

20 Two of Crane's four siblings were similarly inspired to become artists and were involved in creating children's books. His sister Lucy Crane (1842-1882) collaborated with him on several books, and his older brother Thomas Crane (1844-1927) became an art director in a publishing firm.

21 Crane's father suffered from consumption and probably arranged the apprenticeship to ensure his son could earn a living. Linton accepted Crane without demanding the usual premium. For details of Crane's apprenticeship, which ran from 1858 to 1862, see Crane, *Reminiscences*, pp. 45-65.

22 Ibid., p. 45.

23 As well as teaching Crane technical skills, Linton sent him on sketching trips to draw from life, including the zoological gardens in Regent's Park, where his ability for drawing animals was honed. Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 59.

24 For biographical details see John Murdoch, 'Linton, William James (1812-1897)', *ODNB*.

25 Linton processed the designs for a biography of Blake by Alexander Gilchrist (1828-1861). Crane, *Imprint*, p. 81.

26 For Crane's account of Ruskin's visit see *Reminiscences*, pp. 57-8. In addition to *Elements of Drawing*, Crane had read the first volume of Ruskin's *Modern Painters* (1843). Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 1.

Anthony Crane observed that his grandfather never quite overcame his sense of inferiority at his lack of formal education: ‘In spite of Ruskin’s comment of him that he was fortunate, as an artist might suffer more by being born rich than by being born poor, my grandfather undoubtedly suffered psychologically as well as in other ways from his lack of formal education due to the ill-health and premature death of his father, Thomas Crane.’²⁷ Like Cole, Crane educated himself through prodigious reading of key political and philosophical works; he also continued his programme of self-improvement by attending life classes at Heatherley’s, the famous London art school.²⁸ He showed prodigious talent, and at the age of 17 produced a painting ‘The Lady of Shalott’, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in July 1862, raising his hopes of becoming a fine artist.²⁹ In the same year, Crane visited the International Exhibition at South Kensington, and it was there that he first viewed the intensely coloured and detailed compositions of the radical Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and the ornamental work of decorative artists such as Edward Burne-Jones (1833-1898) and William Morris (1834-1896), which fuelled his interest in medieval art.³⁰

Crane took this enthusiasm for decorative art into the next phase of his career as a jobbing illustrator.³¹ In 1863 he was introduced to the enterprising wood engraver and colour printer Edmund Evans (1826-1905), who employed him to illustrate the cheap yellow-back novels, known as ‘mustard plaisters’, as Linton had done.³² Evans had spotted Crane’s great talent for drawing on wood, and under his expert

27 Anthony Crane, ‘My Grandfather Walter Crane’, *Yale University Library Gazette*, 31 (1957), 97-109, (p. 107).

28 Crane mentions reading Francis Newman (1805-1897), J. S. Mill (1805-1897), Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Auguste Comte (1798-1857), as well as the works of Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822). Crane’s family had a subscription to Mudie’s library and he attended meetings of the London Positivists Society. Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 80.

29 The painting sold for five guineas. Crane, *Reminiscences*, pp. 70-1. It was exhibited again at the Royal Academy in 1862. Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 2.

30 Crane viewed the work of other members of the Ecclesiological Society, including John Seddon (1827-1906), William Burges (1827-1881), Philip Webb (1831-1915) and Edward Pugin (1834-1873), son of Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin (1812-1852). Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 72.

31 Crane began his career drawing illustrations for a variety of periodicals and guidebooks knowing that he had to ‘meet the supply or starve’. Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 2. He became a regular contributor to *Once a Week* and *Good Words*. His illustrations for J. R. Wise’s *The New Forest: its History and Scenery* were praised by G. H. Lewes (1817-1878), editor of the prestigious literary journal the *Cornhill Magazine*, as “‘the work of a very young artist of seventeen’”. Cited in Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 73.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 75.

guidance the young artist began designing colour-printed toy books.³³ Then aged just twenty, Crane began to make his mark on children's book illustration and design, bringing creative ideas that would transform the nursery market.

The Routledge toy books

There were many artists illustrating toy books in the Victorian period – for example, Harrison Weir (1824-1906) and 'Phiz' (H. K. Browne, 1815-1882) – but it is widely recognised that Crane's innovative treatment of these cheap colour publications had a radical effect on the quality of nursery books produced for the mass market.³⁴ Forrest Reid and Gordon N. Ray note that Crane was instrumental in raising standards, and Ruari McLean trumpets him as 'the greatest artist who designed Toy Books'.³⁵ Between 1865 and 1876 Crane produced more than 40 toy books, 37 of them for George Routledge and Sons, who were following Dean and Sons' lead in the high-volume market and rapidly expanding their list of titles published in London and New York.³⁶

Through examination of a set of Crane's Routledge toy books held in the National Art Library collections at the V&A, it has been possible to chart these improvements and trace the evolution of the artist's unique style.³⁷ The toy books were rarely dated, and in the first instance not attributed to the artist, but from 1866 Routledge began numbering the titles in the Sixpenny series, which makes dating them much easier.³⁸

33 Edmund Evans, *The Reminiscences of Edmund Evans*, ed. Ruari McLean (Oxford: OUP, 1967), p. 32.

34 Several artists signed their works with rebuses, which have been identified by Masaki in 'A History of the Toy Book', I, pp. 59-60, 354.

35 Forrest Reid, *Illustrators of the Sixties* (Faber & Gwyer, [1928]), p. 231. Gordon, N. Ray, *The Illustrator and the Book in England*, p. 151. Ruari McLean, *Victorian Book Design and Colour Printing*, p. 186. White, writing in 1897, judged that no western colour printing had surpassed Crane's toy books 'even to this date'. See his *English Illustration: 'The Sixties'*, p. 129.

36 Crane created three toy books for London publishers Ward, Lock, Tyler in 1865, for their 'New Shilling Series', and one title for Frederick Warne and Co in 1866 for their 'Aunt Friendly's Coloured Picture Books. Threepenny series'.

37 The V&A National Art Library has examples of all Crane's single edition Routledge toy books apart from *Little Red Riding Hood* (1875) and *King Luckieboy's party*, which I have examined in the compilations [Walter Crane], *The Bluebeard picture book* (London & NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1875]) and [Walter Crane], *King Luckieboy's picture book* (London and NY: George Routledge & Sons, [1871]), both in the NAL Children's Collections.

38 The toy books (including those not produced by Crane) were first listed in the Routledge Wholesale Catalogue of 1866, and renumbering of the titles was carried out in 1868, when they dropped the Aunt Mavor's Toy Book banner. See Masaki, 'A History of the Toy Book', p. 64. The 'Aunt Mavor' banner was inconsistently applied to Crane's toy book covers before that date, but they continued to be marketed as part of this series until 1873. See the April 1873 listing in 'Routledge Wholesale Catalogue RKP215 (70, 71, 72, 73)', p. 80. UCL Special Collections.

Research by Spencer (1975), Masaki (2000) and Stalker and Geoffrey Beare (2009) has enabled publication dates to be more accurately established, thus superseding data prepared by Konody (a list appended to his 1902 monograph), Gertrude Massé (a collector's bibliography prepared in 1923), Muir (a list in his 1971 study of Victorian illustrated books), and Rodney Engen (1975 annotated catalogue), all of which are incomplete and appear to be inaccurately dated.³⁹ Spencer bases her chronological list on advertisements in *The Bookseller*, biographical and autobiographical material, as well as acquisition dates of examples in the Cambridge University Library.⁴⁰ Masaki has prepared a catalogue of Routledge's extensive list of toy books compiled from data in the firm's ledgers.⁴¹ Stalker and Beare have cross-referenced biographical material acquired by the Whitworth Art Gallery in establishing dates.⁴² The latter three lists (which show only minor variations) indicate that Crane published between two and three titles a year in the Routledge Sixpenny series, doubling his output for the firm between 1874 and 1875, when he designed a new set of large-format books for their Shilling series. In corroborating these bibliographies, I have examined a number of sources, including previously undocumented original artwork by Crane in the V&A.⁴³ This accurate dating of titles has been important in assessing the development of Crane's design work.

It is evident that from a very early stage the toy books provided an important locus for Crane's design ideas, and that he viewed them as works of art. Masaki notes that the Routledge Sixpenny series afforded printers the opportunity to experiment with new technology and provided a showcase for their skills in engraving and colour printing, and it is clear that Crane's work was greatly enhanced by Evans's

39 P. G. Konody, *The Art of Walter Crane*, pp. 141-2; Gertrude C. E. Massé, *A Bibliography of First Editions of Books Illustrated by Walter Crane* (The Chelsea Publishing Co, 1923); pp. 12-13; Percy Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books*, pp. 176-7; Rodney Engen, *Walter Crane as a Book Illustrator* (London: Academy Editions; NY: St. Martin's Press, 1975), pp. 97-103.

40 Spencer, *Walter Crane*, pp. 201-2.

41 Masaki, 'A History of the Toy Book', III.

42 Helen Stalker and Geoffrey Beare, 'A Bibliography of Walter Crane Toy Books', appended to Helen Stalker, 'Sleeping Beauties', pp. 46-51. The list includes single titles, compilations and reprints. Stalker is assistant curator at the Whitworth Gallery, and catalogued and archived the Walter Crane Collection acquired by the University of Manchester in 2002.

43 I have cross-referenced the three lists with dated original artwork in the V&A and Whitworth Art Gallery, Routledge Publications ledgers and wholesale catalogues held in the UCL Special Collections, advertisements in toy books, classified advertisements, and Crane's recollections in *Reminiscences*, *Imprint*, and *Easter Art Journal*. Many toy books in libraries, including those in the V&A NAL, are incorrectly dated.

first-class colour work.⁴⁴ Before Crane began work on the Routledge toy books, little attention had been paid to their design. The books often had whole pages of dense black type that was difficult to read, and the pictures were for the most part crudely drawn and printed in lurid colours that the publisher thought would appeal to children. This can be seen in Routledge's 1860 title *Mary's new doll* (Fig. 5.3).⁴⁵ An artist himself, Evans could see that the unsophisticated colour reproduction of such books could be improved to satisfy a more discerning audience. Crane applied aesthetic principles to the toy books designs; he used subtle colours and considered how the illustrations would relate to the text and help a child to 'read' the narrative visually. In his memoir, Evans recalls that Crane's toy books 'were drawn in the most intelligent way, without a fraction of hesitation in the line', and describes the young artist as a 'genius'.⁴⁶ A comment by Konody indicates the revolutionary effect that the new designs for toy books had on the children's market:

One has to be acquainted with the gaudy horrors of previous books intended for use in the nursery, if one wishes to appreciate at its full value the reform initiated by Walter Crane and carried by him to the highest degree of perfection.⁴⁷

However, Crane recalls that there was some resistance to Evans's efforts to introduce 'more tasteful colouring', because the publisher thought that the 'raw coarse colours and vulgar designs' would appeal to a larger audience, and it was some time before the 'newer treatment made itself felt'.⁴⁸

The Sixpenny toy books typically had sixteen pages, printed on one side of the paper (to avoid show-through of coloured ink), and were of a uniform size (19 x 25 cm), with eight leaves stitched in a single gathering between illustrated paper wrappers. The books were also sold mounted on linen, priced at one shilling. At first, Crane's designs were subject to 'very strict limitations in the way of colour,

⁴⁴ Masaki, 'The History of the Toy Book', I, p. 66.

⁴⁵ *Mary's new doll* (George Routledge and Sons, [ca. 1860]). The book shows heavy use of solid black ink and crude shading technique.

⁴⁶ Evans, *Reminiscences*, p. 32. Evans and Crane showed mutual admiration. Crane says he was 'fortunate in being thus associated with so competent a craftsman, and so resourceful a workshop as his'. *Easter Art Annual*, p. 3.

⁴⁷ Konody, *The Art of Walter Crane*, p. 29.

⁴⁸ Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 76.



Fig. 5.3 *Mary's new doll* (Routledge and Sons, [ca. 1860]), 'Dolly and her friends'. NAL 60.W.264. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.4 *Old King Cole* (Routledge and Sons, [ca. 1860]), 'The knave of hearts'. NAL 60.R.Box V. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs 5.5-5.6 Crane, *Sing a song of sixpence* (Routledge & Sons, [1866; repr. 1875]), 'The king was in his counting house' and cover. NAL 60.R.Box XIV (xxxviii) a. Fig. 5.5 Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Fig. 5.6 © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

such as a key black, and one red, and one green (or blue), the intermediate tints, if any, only got by crossing'.⁴⁹ *Sing a song of sixpence* (1866), for example, was produced in this way: the figures drawn without any background; the lines of text printed above the text; and the gothic initial letters decorated in red and blue.⁵⁰ Crane recalls that the early toy books were produced 'to order, almost to a given pattern'.⁵¹ This is noticeable in *Sing a song of sixpence*, which appears to follow the style of one of Routledge's earlier toy books, *Old King Cole* (c. 1860) (Figs. 5.4-5.5).⁵² Nevertheless, it clearly demonstrates Crane's eye for design. The serif type chosen for the cover title cleverly picks up the shape of the outstretched wings of the birds, thus making a connection between word and picture (Fig. 5.6). Crane wanted children to find some amusement in their reading and he concealed some of the four and twenty blackbirds behind the title banner to intrigue them. However, he was careful to draw the correct number of blackbirds, knowing that children are very observant of such details.⁵³

Crane's work was not credited in the early toy books, so he used a cipher to identify himself as the artist within each picture.⁵⁴ In the *Sing a song of sixpence* cover picture of the maid hanging out the clothes it is shown as a monogram on the linen. The use of a pictorial signature became a very effective means for Crane to brand his own work. The crane symbol became more flamboyant as the artist's reputation grew, and he sometimes worked it into a humorous cartoon to amuse young readers.

Crane uses the pictures to help the child reader understand the words, rather than simply to illustrate the text. This can be seen in *Grammar in rhyme* (1868), in the exercise on articles, nouns and adjectives (Fig. 5.7).⁵⁵ Crane treats the text box like a blackboard, placing it within the illustrations of children at play to suggest the

49 Crane, *Imprint*, p. 82.

50 For Crane's explanation of the method see *Easter Art Annual*, p. 3.

51 Ibid., p. 3.

52 [Walter Crane], *Sing a song of sixpence* (London, Glasgow and NY: George Routledge & Sons, [1866; repr. 1875]). *Old King Cole* (George Routledge and Sons, [ca. 1860]).

53 Crane, *Imprint*, p. 85.

54 In the early toy books produced for Ward, Lock and Tyler, and Frederick Warne, the books are only initialled on the final drawing. The first two alphabets produced for Routledge in 1865 (*The railroad alphabet* and *The farmyard alphabet*) do not appear to have been marked at all; however, from 1866 onwards nearly all the picture pages are marked with a rebus, or crane symbol.

55 [Walter Crane], *Grammar in rhyme* ([London]: George Routledge & Sons, [1874]; repr. [1876?]).



Fig. 5.7 Crane, *Grammar in rhyme* (Routledge & Sons, [1868; repr. 1876]), lesson on articles, nouns and adjectives. NAL B.LB.ROUT.GR.1868 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

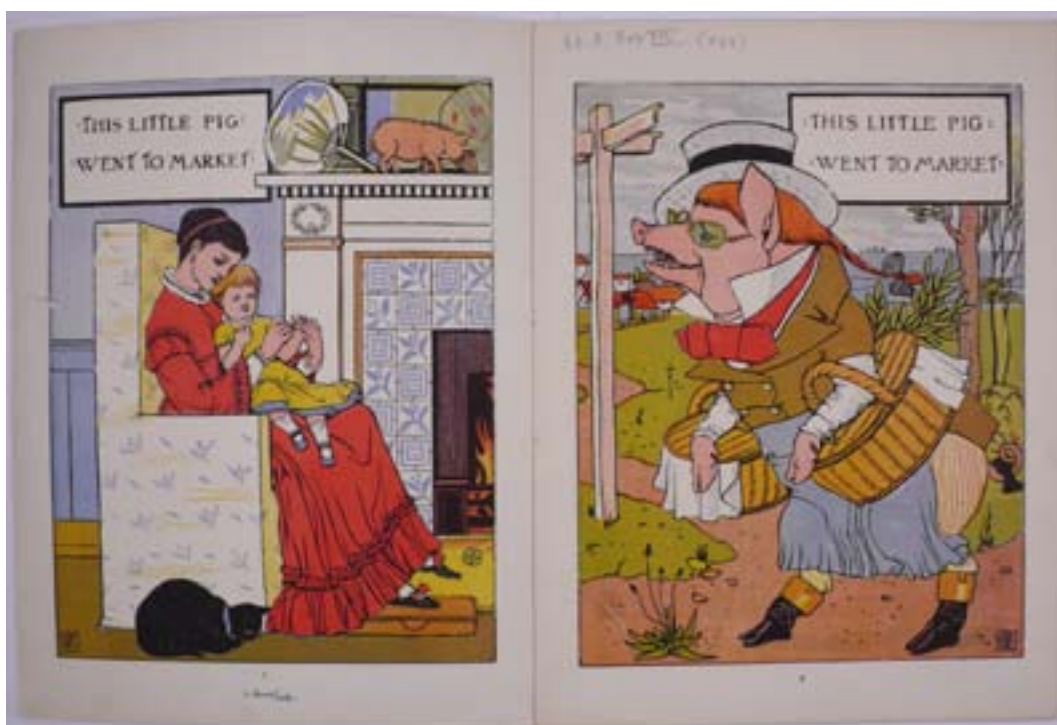


Fig. 5.8 Crane, *This little pig* (Routledge & Sons, [1870; repr. 1876], 'This little pig went to market'. NAL 60.R.Box XIV (xxx). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

idea of learning as an enjoyable everyday activity. To make the lessons memorable, he invents a simple rhyme, relating the parts of speech to the games and toys shown in the pictures to make them relevant to a child. The idea of learning as play is reinforced by showing the children on the green outside the school gates, taking turns on a tree swing and bowling hoops. In the picture on the facing page, which shows a young child imagining her toy animals marching from the Noah's Ark, Crane introduces humour; a parrot is perched on the text box to show that this is an amusing way to learn lessons 'parrot fashion'. Crane understood, therefore, that the arrangement of pictures and words was central to a child's engagement with the text, and that rhyme and humour could be used effectively to increase a child's understanding and enjoyment of the lesson.

The popularity of educational titles is demonstrated in a letter Evans wrote to Crane:

I cannot get Routledges (sic) to look at the book or anything for which you make sketches, they say they will not 'till after Christmas. However, I am so short of work for some of my engravers I will venture on one of them. I think the Grammar the safest as a companion to Multiplication Table. So kindly let me have two or three of these as soon as done.⁵⁶

The instruction indicates that Evans assumed an editorial role in commissioning the books and liaising with publishers, but allowed Crane free rein in the design; it also shows that Routledge geared much of their output to the seasonal gift market.⁵⁷

The rapid development of colour technology soon enabled up to five blocks to be

⁵⁶ Anthony Crane, 'My Grandfather', p. 102. The undated letter was probably written in December 1867, shortly after publication of *Multiplication table in verse*. See also Spencer, *Walter Crane*, p. 50.

⁵⁷ See also Masaki, 'The history of the toy book', I, pp. 353, 355 for her suggestion that printers at this time assumed the role of the modern picture book editor. This underlines Cole's pioneering role as literary editor of the Home Treasury series.

used for each drawing.⁵⁸ Crane drew the key black outlines on wood and then painted the proofs as a guide for the printer. Evans described the process used for printing:

[...] a flesh tint, a red with a fraction of brown in it, a dark blue with brown added, a yellow with raw sienna, were the only printings required to obtain a very good artistic effect.⁵⁹

The toy books show a distinct decorative style from this point (1869), which Crane says developed not only in response to technological advances, but to his observations of the way that young children see the world:

Children, like the ancient Egyptians, appear to see most things in profile, and like definite statement in design. They prefer well defined forms and bright frank colour. They don't want to bother about three dimensions. They can accept symbolic representations.⁶⁰

Crane's new style was also inspired by the current fashion for Japanese art. He was given a set of prints created by the artist Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825), and the 'definite black outline and flat brilliant as well as delicate colours', and the 'vivid dramatic and decorative feeling' gave him the perfect model for the simple design he thought children would appreciate.⁶¹ This influence is evident in treatment of three titles published in 1870: *The fairy ship*, *This little pig went to market* and *King Luckieboy's party*.⁶² The craze for Japanese objects, such as prints, fans and lacquered screens, is also displayed in the domestic interiors featured in these titles.⁶³ The actress Ellen Terry, keen to train her children visually, lined her children's walls

58 From around 1869 the toy books were printed in key black with four colours. Evans, *Reminiscences*, p. 34. For the technological developments that facilitated Crane's work, as well as his complex relationship with printers, engravers and publishers, see Sarah Hyde, 'The Production of Walter Crane's Children's Books', in *Walter Crane 1845-1915: Artist, Designer and Socialist*, ed. Greg Smith and Sarah Hyde (Lund Humphries, 1989), 24-30. (A collection of essays with a catalogue of works exhibited at the Whitworth Art Gallery in 1989.) Hyde focuses on the vital role played by Edmund Evans' engraving and printing workshop in the production of Crane's books.

59 Evans, *Reminiscences*, p. 34. For Evans's colour printing see Ian Porter, 'Edmund Evans', *Illustration*, 8 (Summer 2006), 24-30.

60 Crane, *Imprint*, p. 85.

61 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 107. See also *Imprint*, p. 82.

62 [Walter Crane], *This little pig went to market* (George Routledge and Sons, [1870]); [Walter Crane], *King Luckieboy's party* (George Routledge & Sons, [1871]).

63 Crane included other icons of the Aesthetic movement in his children's books, such as peacocks, poppies, and sunflowers.

with Japanese prints and gave them Crane's toy books to read.⁶⁴

To encourage a child's close observation of the pictures, Crane introduces comic touches. For example, in the picture of the pig going to market in *This little pig* he creates a cartoon character in glasses and cloven boots, and adds bows to both its pigtail wig and curly tail, a sign of recent bereavement (Fig. 5.8, p. 246).⁶⁵ He also places a toy pig on the mantelshelf on the facing page, to encourage observation. The domestic scene showing the mother teaching the rhyme to her baby highlights her role as the child's primary educator, and offers the reader a familiar representation of his own home before transporting him into the imaginary world of the book.⁶⁶

Crane's new-style toy books sold so well that in 1873 Routledge agreed to give him his own series. He designed a uniform cover (25 x 19 cm), which advertised the various titles pictorially and carried a promotional banner identifying him as the artist.⁶⁷ This created a new subset of the Routledge Sixpenny series and established the Walter Crane 'brand', which was advertised separately (Fig. 5.9).⁶⁸ Crane wanted children to see him as a friendly author and he humorously depicts himself on the cover as the bespectacled teacher offering a new set of books for fledgling readers to collect. The title panel positioned to the right of the cover (like a clasp on a bible or prayer book) is designed to encourage children to open the book, as the example of *Old Mother Hubbard* (1874) shows (Fig. 5.10).⁶⁹

The introduction of the Walter Crane series shows how the illustrator became

64 Dame Ellen Terry (1847-1928) did not allow her children Edith (b. 1869) and Gordon Craig (b. 1872) to read "rubbishy books" and Crane's books became their "classic". Cited in Eric de Maré, *The Victorian Woodblock Illustrators* (Gordon Fraser, 1980), p. 157.

65 The contemporary critic Frederick George Stephens (1827-1907) remarks on the pathos evident in Crane's illustration, in which the bereavement of the widower father is signalled with the black bow in his tail, black band round his straw hat, and cracked glasses. F. G. Stephens, 'The Designs of Walter Crane', *Portfolio*, 21 (1890), 12-19, (p. 15).

66 Mary Crane (née Andrews) is the model for the mother; Crane and his wife appear in many of the illustrations.

67 Crane makes effective use of three-colour printing (black, red and green printed on buff paper).

68 Routledge retained the numbering sequence as part of the original Sixpenny series, but from 1876 listed Crane's titles separately on the lower cover advertisements of toy books and in the wholesale catalogue. See UCL Special Collections, *Routledge Wholesale Catalogue*, January 1876, p. 86, bound in Routledge Printed Catalogue RKP 216. For typical advertisements, see 'George Routledge & Sons' Books for Christmas Presents', *Athenaeum*, 15 December 1877, p. 758, which includes the 'Walter Crane Picture Books'.

69 [Walter Crane], *Old Mother Hubbard* (George Routledge & Sons, [1874]; repr. [1876?]).

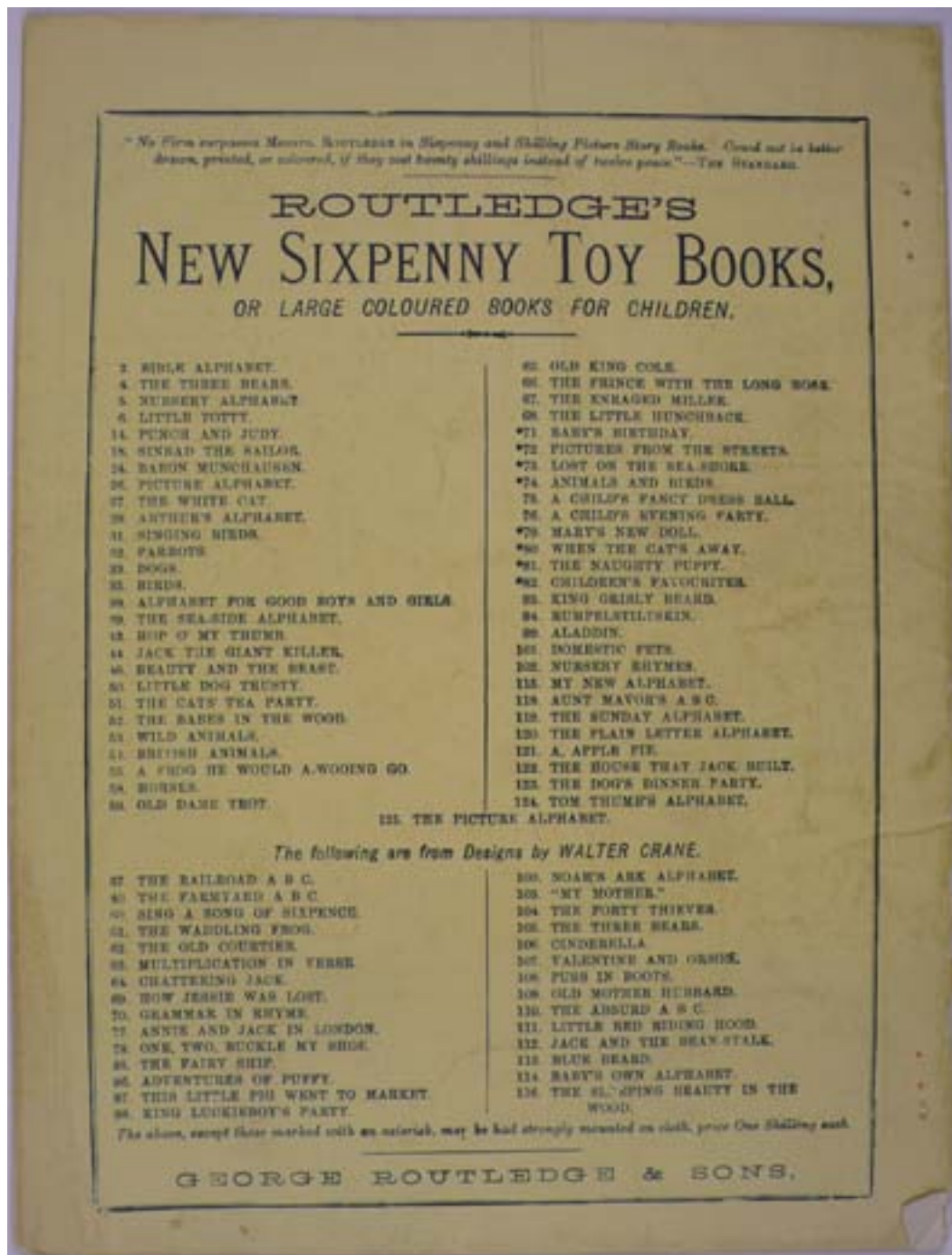


Fig. 5.9 Crane, *Old Mother Hubbard* (Routledge & Sons, [1874; repr. 1876]), lower cover 'New Sixpenny Toy Books' advertisement. NAL 60.R.Box XIV (xix). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

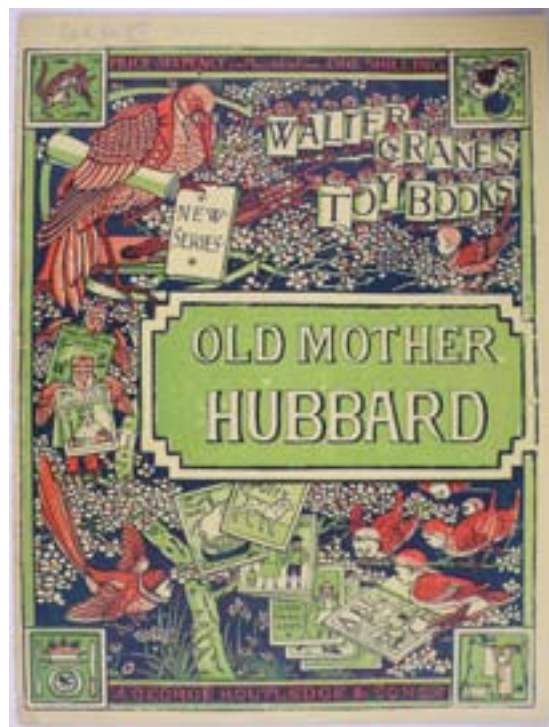


Fig. 5.10 Crane, *Old Mother Hubbard* (Routledge & Sons, [1874; repr. 1876]), cover. NAL 60.R.Box XIV (xix). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

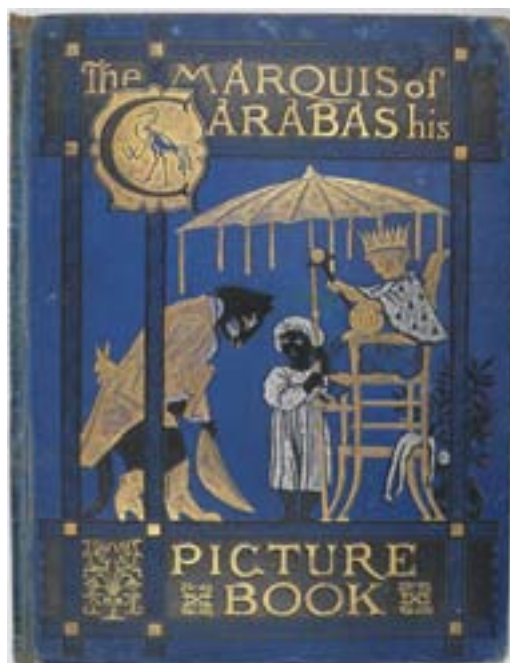


Fig. 5.11 *The Marquis of Carabas his picture book* (Routledge & Sons, [1874]), cover. NAL B.LB.ROUT.1874 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.12 *Walter Crane's new toy book* (Routledge & Sons, [1874]), cover. NAL 60.X.281. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

a marketable commodity. According to Crane, Routledge had shown little appreciation of the improvement in style of his books, although they became aware of ‘an increasing demand’, which was reflected in larger print runs.⁷⁰ Between 4,000 and 40,000 copies of each title were printed, but (much to Crane’s annoyance) Routledge only paid him a single fee of £12 for each original design, with no royalty payments.⁷¹ Crane was particularly outraged on his return from an extended honeymoon in 1873 to find that Routledge had issued a set of the early toy books in a ‘rather gaudy cloth-bound volume entitled “Walter Crane’s Picture Book” with “Chattering Jack” on the cover, but arranged by an unknown hand’.⁷² Crane was not happy to put his name to something that did not meet his exacting standards for design and, not for the first or last time, insisted that further volumes should only be issued under his supervision.⁷³ Subsequent compilations were produced by Crane, such as *The Marquis of Carabas his picture book* (1874), which prominently featured Crane’s logo, and *Walter Crane’s new toy book* (1874), a bumper Christmas book containing nine titles bound in sumptuous green and black illustrated boards stamped in gold, featuring an enticing lock panel, to link it with the other books in the new ‘Walter Crane Toy Books’ series (Figs. 5.11-5.12).⁷⁴ The altercation between Crane and Routledge over the gift books almost certainly precipitated the creation of the artist’s own series. From 1873, therefore, Crane gained greater control over his work, even though he was not being rewarded with repeat fees commensurate with his popularity.

⁷⁰ Crane, *Imprint*, p. 83.

⁷¹ Crane earned just £12 for *Chattering Jack*, for example. See Anthony Crane, ‘My Grandfather’, p. 101. Routledge claimed that there was no profit on sales below 50,000 to justify not paying royalties. Crane, *Imprint*, p. 83. Initial print runs for Crane’s toy books were typically 5,000 (for example, *Grammar in rhyme*, 1868), rising to 10,000 with *One, two, buckle my shoe* (1869), and 20,000 for *My mother* (1873), *Mother Hubbard* (1874), *Puss in Boots* (1874), and *Valentine and Orson* (1874). UCL Library Special Collections: ‘Routledge Publications Book 9’, respectively, p. 305, p. 437, p. 483, and p. 807 (for last three titles). Many of the toy books were reprinted many times, usually in runs of 4,000. The biggest seller appears to have been *Sleeping Beauty*, which had an initial run of 20,000 in 1872, followed by a second printing of 20,000 in 1876 (p. 615).

⁷² Crane, *Imprint*, p. 83. Crane is possibly recalling the title incorrectly, as Routledge issued *Chattering Jack’s picture book* with their own cover design in 1873 and *Walter Crane’s picture book* (designed by himself) in 1874.

⁷³ In fact, Routledge had been including Crane’s toy books in unattributed gift book compilations for some time, binding his titles with the work of other illustrators without his knowledge. See, for example, *Routledge’s coloured picture books*, third series (George Routledge, [1871]), which includes Crane’s *Sing a song of sixpence*, and *Gaping wide-mouth waddling frog*.

⁷⁴ Walter Crane, *Walter Crane’s new toy book* (London & NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1874]); Walter Crane, *The Marquis of Carabas his picture book* (London & NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1874]).

During this period photography was beginning to replace the old practice of drawing directly on to the board by the engraver. For example, the black and white drawings for *Old Mother Hubbard* were sent by Crane from Rome to Evans in London, who had them photographed on to the wood and engraved, returning the proofs to the artist for colouring.⁷⁵ Significantly, this permitted Crane to retain the original drawings. Surviving hand-coloured proofs of the woodcut illustrations for *Jack and the beanstalk* (1875) in the V&A demonstrate Crane's work in progress; they show the blank text panel prior to printing (Fig. 5.13).⁷⁶ Crane sister Lucy supplied most of the 'renderings in verse of the old nursery tales' to fit in the 'little tablet' left for the text.⁷⁷ This method of making the verse fit the design shows that Crane privileged the picture over the text.

Crane noted that even before young children can read or write they draw pictures to tell a story, and this gave him the idea for linear narrative.⁷⁸ The picture panels for *Puss in Boots* (1874) show him to be an early exponent of the comic strip form.⁷⁹ In the scene in which the ogre is turned into a mouse (p. 7) Crane's panelled page design leads the child from one frame to the next in a sequence of detailed pictures that follow the cat's actions, enabling even pre-readers to understand the story (Fig. 5.14). In the full-page picture of the wedding feast (p. 8), Crane also follows the medieval convention of showing the characters at different points of time.⁸⁰ Behind the central scene showing Puss in Boots playing waiter at the table, the cat can be found chasing the mouse he had been pursuing on the previous page; the cat is also shown in the distance being scared witless by a barking dog. Crane's detailed pictures thus reflect and extend the narrative, encouraging the child to

⁷⁵ Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 148. For the use of photography in wood engraving see Geoffrey Wakeman, *Victorian Book Illustration* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973), pp. 76-81.

⁷⁶ 'Proof woodcuts for illustrations to *Jack and the beanstalk*', V&A D.494-500-1907 (P&D).

⁷⁷ Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 5. Crane's sister Lucy Crane also wrote the text for the modern stories *How Jessie was lost* (1868), *Annie and Jack in London* (1869), and *The adventures of Puffy* (1870). See Thomas Crane and Walter Crane, 'In Memoriam', in Lucy Crane, *Art, and the Formation of Taste; Six Lectures by Lucy Crane: With Illustrations Drawn by Thomas & Walter Crane* (Macmillan & Co., 1882), p. xi.

⁷⁸ Crane, *The Imprint*, p. 85.

⁷⁹ [Walter Crane], *Puss in Boots* (George Routledge & Sons [1874]). Cave paintings, Greek vases, the Bayeux tapestry and William Hogarth's 'The Rake's Progress' were early precursors of the comic strip. The comic illustrated novels created in the early nineteenth century by schoolmaster Rodolph Töpffer (1799-1846), and the comic verse narrative *Max und Morris* (1865) by Wilhelm Busch (1832-1908) also anticipated the form. Carpenter and Prichard, *OCCL*, pp. 125-6.

⁸⁰ John Barr, *Illustrated Children's Books* (The British Library, 1986; repr. 1995), p. 50.

study the detail in the pictures and read the story visually. Crane's technique was developed by other children's writers and illustrators, for example, Mary Tourtel (1874-1948) in the Rupert comic strip for the *Daily Express* (launched in 1920), and Raymond Briggs' wordless picture story *The snowman* (1979). The comic strip is now recognised as a legitimate reading approach for reluctant readers, and several publishers have responded with versions of Shakespeare's plays.

Like Lamb, Coleridge and Cole, Crane saw fairy tales as vital agents of cultural heritage and essential to a child's development; he believed the 'spirits of the remote past' held in these stories would 'kindle the imaginations' of young children.⁸¹ Tales from Perrault, Grimm and *The Arabian nights* formed a significant part of the toy book series. In 1874 Crane created a more expensive 'One-Shilling' series of toy books (two shillings mounted on linen), which included six well-known fairy tales designed for more proficient readers.⁸² Crane's classical design for the series cover, showing a young girl reaching up to pick an orange from an exotic potted tree, was inspired by his tour of Italy, which had reignited his interest in Renaissance art (Fig. 5.15).⁸³ Each orange incorporates an illustration from a title in the series, symbolising the fruits of the imagination that the child might pick as a reward. The cover is heavily branded; a Japanese style crane holds the artist's monogram aloof in a vertical banner, which announces: 'Walter Crane's Toy Books Shilling Series'. The cool blues and brighter orange tones chosen by Crane, along with the classical design, gives the new collection a more refined, upmarket appearance that distinguishes it from the Sixpenny series. The 16-page books were designed in a larger format (27 x 23.5 cm), with text and illustrations on separate pages, and a wider colour range (six colours, plus a key block in dark brown, or black) enabling Crane greater scope for the illustrations.

As one of the champions of the Aesthetic movement, Crane intended to cultivate children's interest in colour and design as they learned to read. He viewed aesthetic

81 Walter Crane, *The Bases of Design* (George Bell and Sons, 1898), pp. 230-1.

82 Crane states that the Shilling series was 'a speculation of Mr Evans's'. *Imprint*, p. 83.

83 For details of the classical artists Crane remembered viewing at the National Gallery and the British Museum, see Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 4. The influence can be seen in also be seen in the Sixpenny series titles, such as *Bluebeard* (1875), *Jack and the beanstalk* (1875), and *The sleeping beauty in the wood* (1876).

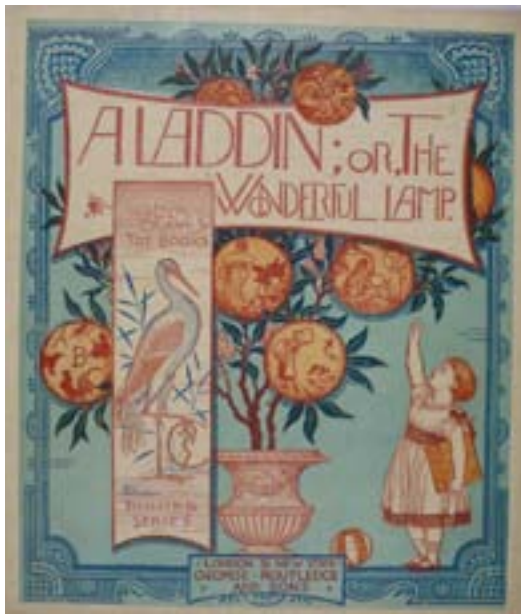


Fig. 5.15 Crane, *Aladdin* (Routledge & Sons, [1875]), cover. NAL 60.R.Box X (i). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

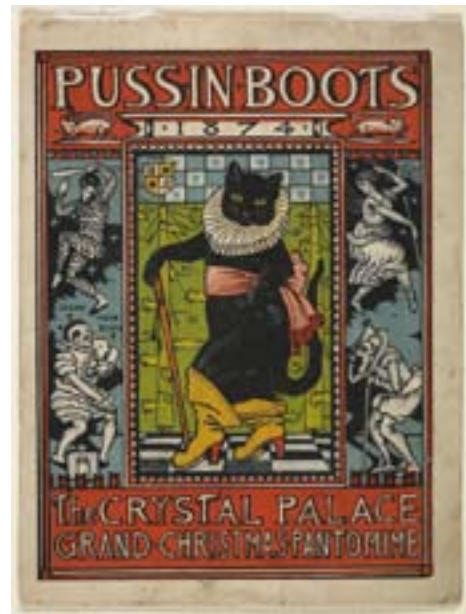


Fig. 5.16 Crane, MSS 'Advertisement for "Puss in Boots" pantomime at Crystal Palace, 1874.' Walter Crane Archive, The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester: WCA.1.2.5.2



Fig. 5.17 Crane, *Beauty and the beast* (Routledge and Sons, 1874), cover. NAL 60.R.Box X (iv). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

sensibility as the sixth sense that could be developed through exposure to art and beauty.⁸⁴ In the centre-page illustration of the beast's drawing room for *Beauty and the beast* Crane experiments with an eclectic mix of styles, which reflect his wide-ranging interest in costume, architecture, furniture design and decorative pattern (Fig. 5.17).⁸⁵ This dramatic use of the centre-spread to create strong visual impact was a new departure for children's books and demonstrates the artistic freedom that Crane had in illustrating children's books:

The best of designing for children is that the imagination and fancy may be let loose and roam freely, and there is always room for humour and even pathos, sure of being followed by that ever-living sense of wonder and romance in the child heart [...]⁸⁶

Hyde judges Crane's technique of using black line to heighten the effect of blue and orange as a '*tour de force* of colour printing'.⁸⁷ The exciting effect of Crane's use of colour is captured in an 1878 story by Louisa M. Alcott (1832-1888), published in the children's magazine *St. Nicholas*, in which one of the characters clasps 'a gorgeous copy of "Bluebeard"', picked from 'the pile of Walter Crane toy-books lying in bewildering colors before her'.⁸⁸ The brilliance of the toy book illustrations also struck the French novelist Anatole France, who commented in 1885 that the artist 'enlumine avec tant de fantaisie et d'humour' (illuminates with such a wealth of fantasy and humour).⁸⁹ It was the beauty of Crane's toy books that made them appealing to adults as well as children. Gleeson White, writing in the influential art journal, *The Studio*, noted that Crane's nursery classics did as much to educate parents as their children. He thought they helped to 'raise the standard of domestic taste in art'.⁹⁰

84 Walter Crane, *Ideals in Art* (George Bell & Sons, 1905), p. 97.

85 Walter Crane, *Beauty and the beast* (London & NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1874]). For a critique of the symbolism inherent in Crane's use of decoration in this illustration, see Helen Stalker, 'Flights of Fancy', *Illustration*, 13 (2007), 8-15, (p. 12).

86 Crane, *Imprint*, p. 86.

87 Crane's technique may have been influenced by Maurice Chevreul's *The Law of Contrast of Colour* (1861), which Evans had printed. See Hyde, 'The production of Walter Crane's Children's Books', pp. 26-7.

88 Louisa M. Alcott (1832-1888), 'Under the Lilacs', *St. Nicholas* (London), 9 (1 July 1878), p. 594.

89 Anatole France (1844-1924), *Le Livre de mon Ami* (Paris: Calmann Lévy - Éditeur, 1885), pp. 310-311. *My Friend's Book*, trans. by Lewis J. May (The Bodley Head, 1913), p. 282. The comment was made in a dialogue on fairy tales at the end of the memoir.

90 Gleeson White, 'Children's Books and their Illustrators', p. 5.

Indeed, so original and appealing were Crane's colour schemes that architects consulted the toy book illustrations as a source of inspiration, which resulted in commissions for wallpapers, friezes and decorated panels.⁹¹ This helped establish Crane's reputation as a fashionable designer. The toy books influenced popular culture in a number of ways. For example, *Every Girl's Annual* proposed using the outline figures as embroidery templates, and *Aunt Judy's Annual* suggested them as a reference for fairy tale costumes.⁹² Crane was also approached to design an advertisement for the 'Puss in Boots' pantomime at Crystal Palace in 1874, following publication of his toy book version of the tale (Fig. 5.16, p. 256).⁹³ This demonstrates that through the popularity of the toy books Crane had become a household name.

Working drawings for *Goody Two Shoes* – a revival of the eighteenth-century story about the girl who teaches the village children to read – show Crane's careful drafting of the composition to direct the reader's eye (Fig. 5.18).⁹⁴ The central characters are arranged to frame the detailed rural setting in the distance, mimicking the effect of a medieval painting of a bible event. Crane viewed line as a 'language, a most sensitive and vigorous speech of many dialects', which he used to convey the details of the narrative:

[...] line is capable not only of recording natural fact and defining character, but also of conveying the idea of movement and force, of action and repose; and, further, of appealing to our emotions and thoughts by variations and changes in its directions, the degree of its emphasis, and other qualities.⁹⁵

Crane's use of colour in the printed version brings the scene alive, highlighting details, such as the letters of the alphabet scattered on the grass and the hats on the

91 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 4, and *Imprint*, p. 85. Jeffrey & Co. commissioned Crane to design nursery wallpapers, specimens of which are in the V&A Prints and Drawings collection. For example, 'Nursery Rhymes' (c. 1875), V&A E.42A-1971 (P&D).

92 Anon, 'A chat about work', in *Every Girl's Annual* (George Routledge and Sons, 1878), 70-82 (p. 79). Alfred Scott Gatty, ' "Rumplestiltskin." An Extravaganza Adapted from one of Grimm's Household Stories', *Aunt Judy's Annual*, ed. H. K.F. Gatty, 18 (George Bell & Sons, 1880), 98-113, (p. 98).

93 'Advertisement for "Puss in Boots" pantomime at the Crystal Palace, 1874' (proof), Walter Crane Archive, Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester, WCA.1.2.5.2.

94 'Working drawings (5) for wood-engraved illustrations to *Goody Two Shoes*', V&A E.242-246-1948 (P&D). Walter Crane, *Goody Two Shoes* (London and NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1874]).

95 Walter Crane, *Line and Form* (1900; G. Bell & Sons, 1904), p. 21, 22.



Fig. 5.18 Crane, *Goody Two Shoes* (Routledge and Sons, [1874]). Working drawings for wood-engraved illustration. Black chalk on tracing paper. V&A E.243-1948 (P&D) with colour-printed page from book NAL 60.R.Box X (xxxvii). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

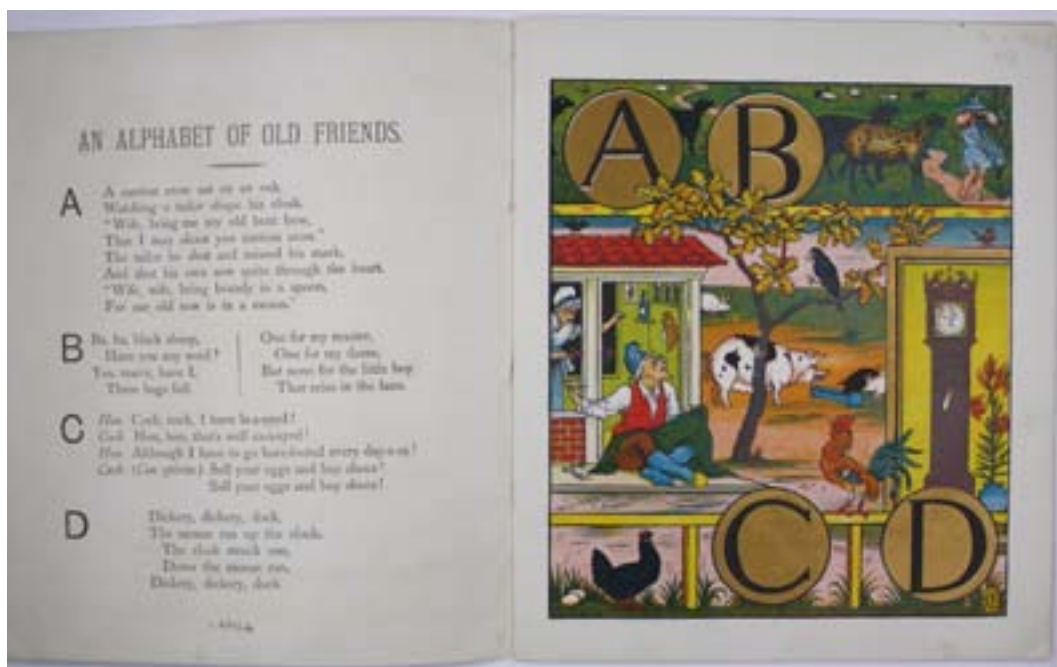


Fig. 5.19 Crane, *The alphabet of old friends* (Routledge and Sons, [1874]), 'A-D'. NAL 60.R.Box (iii). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

children's heads, which are suggestive of halos. These are angelic children, who show great interest in learning to read.

Illustrated alphabets were considered a very effective means to familiarise children with letters and were immensely popular in the Victorian period; Crane designed six for Routledge. In *The alphabet of old friends* (1874), a lively nursery rhyme edition from the Shilling series, he incorporates the letters of the alphabet as symbols in the pictures.⁹⁶ For the letters A–D Crane draws a detailed colour illustration for each of the four rhymes featured on the printed page, then pieces the pictures together to create a visually stimulating full-page collage. The initial letters are illuminated in dazzling gold – like a medieval manuscript – to catch the child's eye and show their connection with the letters printed in the text.⁹⁷ The gold detail also made the book attractive for the important Christmas gift market (Fig. 5.19). The *Athenaeum* reviewer was suitably impressed, proclaiming Crane's toy books collection for 1875 to be 'works of nursery art'.⁹⁸

Crane's toy books remained popular; 36 of his titles for Routledge were republished between 1895 and 1910 by John Lane (1851-1921) of the Bodley Head, marketed as the nine penny 'Walter Crane's Picture Books Re-issue'.⁹⁹ Nine new compilations (each containing three titles) were also published, selling for 4s. 6d.¹⁰⁰ Crane designed new covers and title-pages to update the books for a new generation of children, introducing humour with puns, rhymes and amusing sketches (Figs. 5.20-5.22). Modern pen-and-ink endpaper drawings were created to lead the child into the story in 'a suggestive and agreeable, but not obtrusive way', to give a flavour of the books without detracting from the main illustrations, for example in the comical

96 Walter Crane, *The alphabet of old friends* (London & NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1874]). Crane drew attention to the fact that the letters of the alphabet were originally represented as pictures or symbols. Crane, *Line and Form.*, p. 15.

97 The artist and author Martin Hardie, a librarian at the Art Library of the South Kensington Museum (now the National Art Library of the V&A), likened Crane to a medieval artist. See *English Coloured Books*, pp. 275-6.

98 'Art for the Nursery', *Athenaeum*, 18 December 1875, 836-7 (p. 836).

99 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, pp. 12-13. Crane secured the copyright by buying back the original blocks from Routledge in 1894, and immediately negotiated the contract with John Lane. Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 373.

100 Price advertised in *The Morning Post*, 4 November 1897. Dodd Mead in New York later reprinted many of the collected volumes without the new covers and endpaper designs for the individual titles.



Fig. 5.20 Crane, *This little pig* (John Lane, [1895]), cover. NAL A.LB.LANE.TH.1895 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.21 Crane, *Mother Hubbard her picture book* (John Lane, [1897]), title page. NAL 863.AA.0046 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

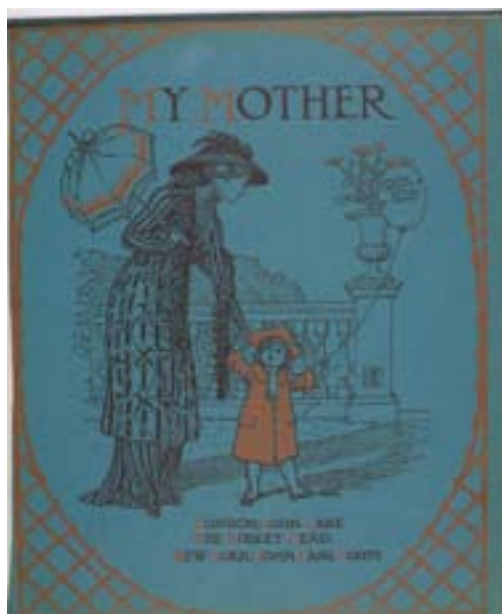


Fig. 5.22 Crane, *My mother*, in *The buckle my shoe picture book* (John Lane, [1910]), cover. NAL 863.AA.0044 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.23 Crane, *Puss in Boots*, endpapers in *Cinderella's picture book* (John Lane, [1897]). NAL 863.AA.0047 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

endpapers for *Puss in Boots*, in which Crane shares a visual joke with readers and shows how they might dress up to act out the story for themselves (Fig. 5.23).¹⁰¹ The *Times* reviewer fully approved of Crane's modern endpapers, finding those for *Puss in Boots* 'delightful'.¹⁰² Crane was gratified that the toy books had appealed to two generations of children, earning the distinction of being 'thumbed and torn up in the nursery on the one hand, and on the other, of a dignified repose in the drawers of the collector'.¹⁰³

The bibliophile Brander Matthews (1852-1929), writing in 1896, was particularly impressed that Crane's well-designed sixpenny books would now reach the children of the poor; he saw Crane's work extending aesthetic principles to the 'baby's library' of working-class homes.¹⁰⁴ The *Pall Mall Budget* similarly noted the popularity of Crane's books, even among the children in the workhouse.¹⁰⁵ This view of the toy books as an agent of cultural and educational transformation is redolent of Ruskin's comments on popular art, which had inspired so much of the Victorian design reform movement:

Admirable skill, and some of the best talent of modern times, [is] occupied in supplying this want; and there is no limit to the good which may be effected by rightly taking advantage of the powers we now possess of placing good and lovely art within the reach of the poorest classes.¹⁰⁶

Cole's well-designed books in the Home Treasury could only reach an elite well-off middle-class market that could afford five shillings for a coloured book, but Crane's toy book designs proved that aesthetic principles could be applied to mass-market books costing just sixpence, or a shilling.

101 Walter Crane, *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New*, 3rd edn (George Bell and Sons, [1905]), p. 287. Walter Crane, *Puss in Boots*, in *Cinderella's picture book* (London and NY: John Lane The Bodley Head, [1897]).

102 'Christmas Books', *Times*, 22 December 1897, p. 6.

103 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 13.

104 Brander Matthews, *Bookbindings, Old and New* (London and NY: George Bell & Sons, 1896), p. 277.

105 *Pall Mall Budget*, 25 June, 1891, in [Articles Relating to Walter Crane 1888-1893], V&A NAL RC.LL.77 (Special Collections), p. 4. (A scrapbook of reviews and letters.)

106 John Ruskin, *Lectures on Art* (NY: Allworth Press, 1996), p. 54. Ruskin's inaugural lectures as the first Slade Professor of Fine Art at Oxford were delivered in 1870.

The ‘baby’ books

The first book in Crane’s baby trilogy – *The baby’s opera: a book of old rhymes with new dresses* – was published in time for Christmas 1876.¹⁰⁷ Crane had finally lost patience with Routledge refusing to give royalty payments and he and Evans invested in the new project, for which Routledge acted as nominal publisher and distributor. A novel book of traditional nursery rhymes, it included musical scores arranged by the artist’s sister Lucy Crane (1842-1882).¹⁰⁸ Crane consulted with Evans over the general idea and size of the book, but had freedom to design the prototype:

[... Evans] supplied me with a dummy book, so that I was enabled to design the volume complete, with the pages in relation to each other and in strict accordance with the exigencies of the press and the cost of production.¹⁰⁹

Annotated proofs in the Crane archive at the Whitworth Art Gallery show that Evans consulted Crane over colour reproduction, demonstrating the exacting standards applied to the books (Fig. 5.24).¹¹⁰

Crane carried out his bookwork alongside his ‘more ambitious’ work as an artist, and the influence of his work as a decorative designer is particularly evident in the *Baby* titles; for example, the picture tiles he had recently designed for Maw and Company gave him the idea for the quarto format (18 x 18 cm), and inspired the illustrative style.¹¹¹ The smart tan-coloured boards of *Baby’s opera* (varnished for protection) were intended to mimic the appearance of an expensive leather-bound book, and the yellow lettering and illustration achieved the effect of the cover being stamped in gold. Crane’s cover design thus overcame the limitations of budget as well as taking into account the fact that young children would handle the book.

107 Walter Crane, *The baby’s opera* (London and NY: George Routledge and Sons [1877]). Books were listed with the date for the New Year following Christmas.

108 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 5. Crane’s design for *Baby’s opera* was original, but the idea of an illustrated rhyme book was not entirely new. See *Little songs for me to sing: the illustrations by J. E. Millais, R. A.* (Cassell Petter & Galpin, [1865]).

109 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 178.

110 ‘Proof of illustration from “The baby’s opera”: “My lady’s garden”, with Accompanying Note’, Walter Crane Archive, Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester: WCA.1.1.1.5.222.

111 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 22. For tile designs for Maw and Company, see Spencer, *Walter Crane*, pp. 76, 113, and Colin White, *The World of the Nursery* (Herbert Press, 1984) p. 125.



Fig. 5.24 Crane, 'Proof of illustration from "The baby's opera": "My Lady's Garden", with Accompanying Note.' Walter Crane Archive, The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester: WCA.1.1.1.5.222



Fig. 5.25 Crane, *Baby's opera* (Routledge and Sons, [1877]), upper and lower covers. NAL 60.U.81A (QM) and NAL 60.W.51. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

The practical design provides a model for baby books even today.¹¹²

In Crane's witty drawing for 'Hey diddle diddle!', featured on the cover, the title banner and ornamented side panels form the proscenium arch of a stage on which a Willow pattern plate and an elegant Old English spoon sing a duet, quite oblivious of the cow jumping over the moon behind them (Fig. 5.25). The cat is playing the fiddle like a virtuoso artist and the laughing dog is seated like a concertgoer. On the lower cover a crane and two small children, dressed in white tie for the opera, hold up the score for the rhyme as if it were the cue board for a concert hall sing-a-long. These visual jokes have an educational purpose. For example, the three blind mice featured in the bottom panel of the cover illustration appear to be running into the book and reappear in the fly leaf pages, apparently outwitting the fiddle-playing cat by scampering past it, exciting the curiosity of children, and teaching them to turn over the page.

The decorative panels that frame the music for *Baby's opera* were inspired by designs for a classical frieze. Crane was working at the time on a frieze illustrating the story of Cupid and Psyche, which had been designed by Burne-Jones for the wealthy artist George Howard's stylish Queen Anne house near Kensington Palace.¹¹³ *Baby's opera* was dedicated to 'The Honourable Mrs. George Howard', doubtless in gratitude for her hospitality (she had the Cranes to stay just after the birth of their first son), but also demonstrating his association with cultured members of the aristocracy.¹¹⁴

Crane's design was also influenced by a Burne-Jones design for a stained-glass window, 'crowded with figures and detail', which 'showed the influence of D. G. Rossetti'.¹¹⁵ The panels for *Baby's opera* are packed with detail to create miniature pictorial narratives. Twelve of the rhymes are illustrated with full-page colour

112 Stella Blackstone and Debbie Hart, Shirley Hughes, and Helen Oxenbury are among the many contemporary artists who have created baby board books.

113 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 167. The house, designed by Philip Speakman Webb (1831-1915), was at 1 Palace Green. See Christopher Ridgway, 'Howard, George James, ninth earl of Carlisle (1843-1911)', *ODNB*.

114 David M. Fahey, 'Howard, Rosalind Francis, countess of Carlisle (1845-1921)', *ODNB*. Lionel Crane was born in May 1876.

115 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 179. Crane had been shown Burne-Jones's cartoon by the painter and illustrator Birket Foster (1825-1899), a relative and close neighbour of Evans.

wood engravings featuring classical, medieval or pastoral scenes, for example, 'My Lady's Garden' (Fig. 5.26). Crane achieves a sense of unity of design in the pictures through similar style of composition and use of colour. Some of the illustrations were reproduced as tiles and stained glass for fashionable homes, such as the staircase window (Fig. 5.27), which features several of the pastoral designs from *Baby's opera*, including 'My Lady's Garden'. The decorative glass had been created for one of the Arts and Crafts houses in London's first garden suburb, Bedford Park, built in the 1880s.¹¹⁶

The book was immediately popular: Crane considered it the 'most successful' of all his titles.¹¹⁷ Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914) wrote one of the many 'gratifying letters' that Crane received in praise of the new-style book:

The sweet humour, the dainty design, and the good drawing of the pictures make it a delight for every person of taste, no matter what age he or she may be.¹¹⁸

Middle class parents, who were able to afford a five-shilling book, flocked to buy *Baby's opera*, enthralled by Crane's suggestion of nursery rhymes as an early cultural experience. The publishing trade had told Crane that a five-shilling book without gold would never sell, but *Baby's opera* was a runaway success, selling over 40,000 copies.¹¹⁹ *Punch* waxed lyrical about *Baby's opera*, hailing it as 'the cleverest, prettiest, fancifullest, and, generally, superlativest Christmas book'.¹²⁰ Beatrix Potter owned the book and was inspired to make a tracing of the illustration for

¹¹⁶ The window, which has most of its panels intact, is in a detached private house.

¹¹⁷ Crane, *The Imprint*, p. 84.

¹¹⁸ Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 179. Professor Hubert von Herkomer (1849-1914).

¹¹⁹ Ten thousand copies of the first edition quickly sold out and more than 50,000 copies were printed in Crane's lifetime. *Easter Art Annual*, p. 5. *Baby's opera* also made a big impact in America. However, it was pirated by the publishers McLoughlin, forcing Crane to publicly denounce the edition in *Scribner's Monthly* for 'grossly' misrepresenting his drawings 'both in style and coloring'; he described the full-page coloured plates as 'complete travesties'. 'Culture and Progress', *Scribner's Monthly*, September 1877, p. 722, cited in Lundin, *Victorian Horizons*, p. 76. *St. Nicholas* magazine in London sympathised with Crane and raised concerns about the fake copy damaging the good name of the artist and 'spoiling the taste of the youngsters', telling its readers to buy only 'true' copies of the book carrying the names of Routledge, Crane, and Evans on the title page. See "'The Baby's Opera'" and Walter Crane', *St Nicholas*, I, 1 November 1877, p. 69.

¹²⁰ 'Some Christmas Books', *Punch*, 6 January 1877, p. 297.



Fig. 5.26 Crane, *Baby's opera* (Routledge and Sons, 1877) 'My lady's garden'. NAL 60.W.15(b). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.27 Crane, Stained glass window panel 'My lady's garden', *Baby's opera* [c. 1880]. Private house, Bedford Park, London.

‘Mrs Bond’ when she was ten.¹²¹ The royal nursery received a copy, which is held in the National Art Library collection; its scuffed condition suggests that it was a well-used book.¹²² Reviewers of *Baby’s opera* emphasised the artistic innovation of its production.¹²³ The *Athenaeum*, for example, compared Crane’s work to that of Stothard, Poynter and ‘the best German Kinderlieder’, and applauded his book for helping to ‘form an art-loving generation’.¹²⁴

Crane’s second book of baby rhymes *The baby’s bouquet: ‘A fresh bunch of old rhymes and tunes’* was published in time for Christmas 1878.¹²⁵ Like the toy books this shows cross-fertilization from Crane’s interior design work: the decorative style of the cover is clearly influenced by Crane’s designs for wallpaper, incorporating nursery characters within a repeating pattern (Fig. 5.28). Crane’s mock-up book of pen and water-colour designs, which is in the V&A, includes his sample patterns for the covers and end papers, and shows his meticulous planning of illustrations and decorative borders to frame the music.¹²⁶ It also demonstrates that he worked out the visual effect of the book before adding the text; notes regarding page re-ordering show that he considered the impact of each double opening in relation to the next, and regarded the book as an integrated unit.

In the delicate frontispiece drawing, a girl wheels her brother in his wicker baby carriage through the nursery to be presented with a symbolic gift of flowers by a winged fairy in pre-Raphaelite dress (Fig. 5.29).¹²⁷ The baby boy clutches a book, suggesting the transformation of the flower bouquet into a volume of nursery verse

121 Drawing of ‘Mrs Bond’ (p. 29 in *Baby’s opera*), in ‘Sketchbook containing drawings by Beatrix Potter, 1876’, V&A BP.473 (LB). Potter’s copy of *Baby’s opera* is held in the Beatrix Potter Collection at the V&A AAD/206/4/16. I am grateful to Emma Laws, Warne Curator of Children’s Books at the V&A, for drawing my attention to these objects.

122 The copy is held in the Queen Mary Collection, bequeathed to the museum in 1936. V&A NAL 60.U.81A (QM).

123 Lundin, *Victorian Horizons*, p. 75.

124 ‘Books for Children’, *Athenaeum*, 17 March 1877, p. 358.

125 Walter Crane [with Lucy Crane], *The baby’s bouquet* (London & NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1878]). The new collection of rhymes, which was also set to music by Lucy Crane, included some French and German verses she had translated.

126 Walter Crane, ‘*The baby’s bouquet* [...] Original volume of designs for the engraver’ (pen and watercolour), V&A E.1406-1464-1931 (P&D).

127 Crane used two of his children as models – Beatrice aged four, and one-year-old Lionel. The original pencil sketch ‘Beatrice and Lionel Crane (Dec 21 ’77)’ is in the Walter Crane Archive, Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester: WCA.1.4.4.36.

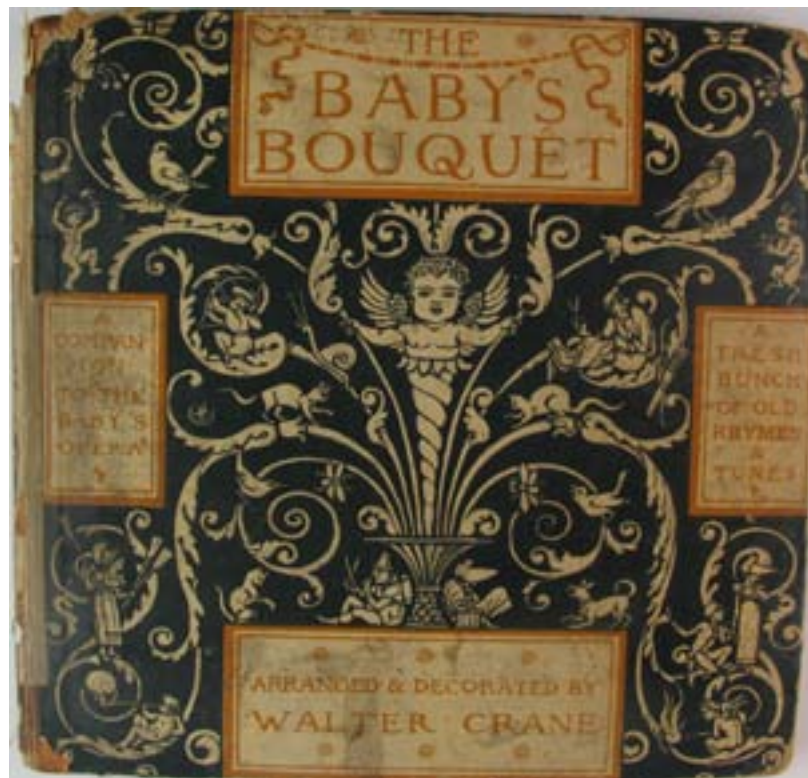


Fig. 5.28 Crane, *The baby's bouquet* (Routledge & Sons, [1878]), cover. NAL 60.W.16 (b). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.29 Crane, *Baby's bouquet*, frontispiece and title page from 'Original volume of designs for the engraver' in pen and watercolour. V&A E.1413-1931 (P&D). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

that is just the right size for him to hold. The nursery scene with its fashionable wallpaper and wall panels decorated with scenes from nursery rhymes, complete with Queen Anne dollhouse for the children to play with, almost serves as an advertisement for the artist's decorative interior designs. Contemporary settings are shown in several of the full-page illustrations for *Baby's bouquet*. The illustrated panels on the title-page, which show babies tending plants or seated in high chairs making music with their spoons and plates, reflect Crane's interest in ideas about the value of gardening and music, promoted by progressive educationists such as Froebel.¹²⁸ Close examination of the central bouquet on the title page reveals that each bloom depicts a character, animal or object from one of the musical rhymes, demonstrating Crane's understanding of the way that children study pictures intently and observe their smallest details. In one of his lectures, Crane notes the pleasure to be had by the beholder in a 'harmonious or rhythmical arrangement of form and line':

Ornament in its developed, or sophisticated and conscious, stage seems to me to have a close analogy to music of certain types, in which the sensuous delight in rhythm and melody, as well as the technical skill and invention of the musician, constitute the principal charm.¹²⁹

Baby's bouquet received many warm reviews.¹³⁰ The baby books also fired parents' imaginations; a mother thought that Crane's baby books could inspire artistic expression in children and sent ideas to the *St. Nicholas* magazine for costumes and scenery to create tableaux vivants – living pictures – after the illustrations.¹³¹ However, Crane had to admit that it 'never quite reached the same numbers as its

128 Educationists in Britain were studying Froebel's theories. See the section on *The golden primer* later in this chapter.

129 Walter Crane, *Ideals in Art*, p. 102. The educationist Dorothy Neal White observed her young daughter's sensual delight in *Baby's opera*; she describes her looking intently at the pictures and stroking her favourites to show her appreciation. See her *Books Before Five* (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1954), pp. 88-90.

130 The *Bristol Mercury* admired the 'decorative ornaments' and thought the contents page was a 'finished specimen of art'; review in a Routledge advertisement placed in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 30 November 1878, p. 710. The *John Bull* described *Baby's bouquet* as a 'dainty little volume' that is 'marvellously and exhaustively illustrated with a variety of the quaintest and most whimsical designs by Walter Crane'; 30 November 1878, p. 775. The *Graphic* applauded its educational value: 'Mr Crane is doing an admirable job in educating the eye and cultivating the taste of the youngsters', 7 December 1878, p. 583. Caldecott, a close friend of Crane since becoming Evans' toy book illustrator, wrote admiringly of his fellow artist's work to William Clough: 'Lovely things in W. Crane's *Baby's Bucket*'; letter dated 13 December 1878, cited in Randolph Caldecott, *Yours Pictorially: Illustrated Letters of Randolph Caldecott*, ed. Michael Hutchins (London and NY: Frederick Warne, 1976), p. 34.

131 See 'The letter-box', *St. Nicholas* (London), 3, 1 January 1881, p. 252.

predecessor', and he suggests that this may have been because he did not immediately respond to commercial demand for a sequel to *Baby's opera*, fearing that a book produced to order would be 'less spontaneous'.¹³² Crane's 'unbusiness-like laxity' gave Kate Greenaway the chance to benefit from his success; he was incensed when Routledge advertised her first book of rhymes *Under the window* as a companion to *Baby's opera*, and insisted they retract the notice.¹³³ Nevertheless, Greenaway's popular book of rhymes stole the march on Crane's legitimate companion, and she became one of his keenest rivals alongside Caldecott, who replaced him as toy book illustrator.¹³⁴ Crane had become a victim of his own success.

The final book in the baby trilogy – *The baby's own Æsop* – did not appear until almost a decade later, in 1877, and shows a difference in style from its earlier companions.¹³⁵ Although the ornamented hand-lettering is strongly influenced by the work of William Blake (1757 - 1827), whom Crane greatly admired as a bookmaker, the illustration of the Greek moral tales is carried out mainly in a classical vein (Fig. 5.30). The delightful cover invites young readers to enter Walter Crane's house of fables; a cute baby dressed in a toga is reaching up to knock at the porticoed front door, which is guarded by two cranes (Fig. 5.31). The architectural motif is extended in the endpapers, which have a repeat pattern designed to resemble a tiled hallway. Crane was much later to explain the theory of this design technique, which he had already successfully employed in both *Baby's opera* and *Baby's bouquet*, and which is perhaps central to their originality and their brilliance:

If we are to be playful and lavish, if the book is for Christmastide or for children, we may catch a sort of fleeting butterfly idea on the fly-leaves before we are brought with becoming, through dignified curiosity, to a short pause at the half-title. Having read this, we are supposed to pass on with somewhat bated breath until we come to the double doors, and the front and full title

132 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 180. See also Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 5.

133 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 180.

134 The high print runs for Greenaway's book (20,000, followed by 70,000) eclipsed Crane's *Baby's opera*; see Lundin, *Victorian Horizons*, p. 77. Crane's objection to Routledge using his name to advertise Greenaway's *Under the window*, as well as his irritation at having been so closely associated with Caldecott and Greenaway, is passionately expressed in a letter to Isidore Spielmann (Greenaway's biographer) dated 10 April 1905, MS V&A NAL 862.AA.0046 (REN).

135 Walter Crane, *The baby's own Æsop* (London & NY: George Routledge & Sons, 1887). W. J. Linton (Crane's former mentor) adapted the fables.



Fig. 5.30 Crane, *Baby's own Æsop* (Routledge, (1887)), 'The dog in the manger', pp. 18-19. NAL 60.W.17 (b). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.31 Crane, *Baby's own Æsop* (Routledge, (1887)), cover. NAL 861.AA.0604 (REN). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

are disclosed in all their splendour.¹³⁶

Crane thus envisages the book as a house with a series of rooms that the child might enter and explore.¹³⁷

However, *Baby's own Æsop* was not as popular and was less widely reviewed, perhaps because Linton's laboured rhymes for the fables did not work well as nursery jingles.¹³⁸ Crane himself later conceded that the classical approach and lack of music in *Baby's own Æsop* made it much less 'simple and direct in its appeal to childhood' than its companions in the baby trilogy.¹³⁹ But the reputation of the Baby series remained high: critics of Crane's work have often cited them.¹⁴⁰ Warne took over publication of the Baby titles in the twentieth century, and the books have continued to be reissued right up to the present day.¹⁴¹ The square format, the 'rooms' concept, and the unity and intensity of the overall design created a wholly new sector within the nursery market, which imitators were quick to follow, but which has seldom been equalled.

A romance of the Three Rs

In the year before publication of *Baby's own Æsop*, Crane devised an innovative set of fantasy stories that show how early learning can be turned into

136 Crane describes the end papers as 'a kind of quadrangle, forecourt, or even a garden or grass plot before the door'; he suggested that the repeat pattern should resemble a 'printed textile, or miniature wallpaper, in one or more colours', which should not compete with the illustrations proper. Crane, *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books*, p. 287.

137 John Hutton explores the use of this architectural motif in Crane's illustration for Lucy Crane's translation of *The household stories from the collection of the brothers Grimm* (1882). See John Hutton, 'Walter Crane and the Decorative Illustration of Books', *Children's Literature*, 38 (2010), 27-43.

138 The *Athenaeum* approved of 'classical romance' of the designs: 'By adhering to classic colours, incidents, and costumes, Mr. Crane has added to the interest of the fables he has illustrated.' See 'Christmas Books', *Athenaeum*, 11 December 1886, p. 788. *The Country Gentleman*, thought the book too 'crowded', but predicted, incorrectly, 'it will sell like wildfire all the same'; 'The Man About Town', *The County Gentleman: A Sporting Gazette and Agricultural Journal*, 27 November 1886, p. 1535.

139 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 5. Also Crane *Reminiscences*, p. 189;

140 Alice Meynell (1847-1922) commended the *Baby's opera* illustrations in 'The Illustration of Children's Books', *Imprint*, 13 February 1913, 95-6. In his 1933 retrospective, which includes many of Crane's books, Philip James declares that *Baby's opera* 'appeals now as much as ever to children'; *Children's Books of Yesterday* (London: The Studio; NY: Studio Publications, 1933), p. 115. A. A. Milne's 1948 guide to children's books includes *Baby's opera* and *Baby's own Æsop* amongst its nursery favourites. See *Books for Children: A Reader's Guide* (London, Toronto and Madras, CUP, 1948), pp. 8-9.

141 Routledge issued a limited edition art volume for collectors shortly before Warne succeeded as publisher. Walter Crane, *Triplets: comprising The baby's opera, The baby's bouquet, and The baby's own Æsop* (George Routledge & Sons Limited, 1899). Recent reissues include the 2011 paperback reprint of *Baby's own Æsop* published by Pook Press.

imaginative games.¹⁴² The series consisted of three volumes published by Marcus Ward between 1885 and 1886, advertised at 2s. 6d. each: *Little Queen Anne* (about reading), *Pothooks and perseverance* (about learning to write) and *Slateandpencilvania* (about counting).¹⁴³ Crane has fun with heavy punning throughout the books. The decorative cover (22 x 22 cm) for the six shilling combined gift edition, titled *A romance of the Three Rs. Penned and pictured by Walter Crane*, which shows children riding on a winged rocking horse, was designed as a visual metaphor for the struggle children have in early learning (Fig. 5.32).¹⁴⁴

In *Slateandpencilvania*, the first of the three books, the sailor-suited Dick sets sail, but like Robinson Crusoe capsizes in rough seas and finds himself washed up on a make believe island made of slates and pencils. He meets the characters from the familiar ‘Sing a song of sixpence’ rhyme dressed as natives, who teach him arithmetic: the native king is doing addition in his counting house; the queen is in her parlour subtracting honey from a pot; the maid is in the garden doing multiplication with pegs on the washing line (Fig. 5.34). The boy then tries out his new mathematical skills in a game of shopping.

Percy Vere, the hero of *Pothooks and perseverance*, dresses up as a knight and mounts his hobbyhorse to do battle with pen and ink. Showing great determination, he finally masters writing his name and is rewarded with lunch. The child’s imagination runs riot and he sees letters arising in everything he does: ‘A’ for ‘amount’ of food; ‘B’ for his bowl (Fig. 5.35). After further struggles with the ABC serpent, Percy succeeds in writing out the entire alphabet, and as a ‘full-fledged penman’ he is pictured resplendent in the wings of a bird of paradise, proudly wearing a laurel crown. In *Little Queen Anne*, a small girl dresses up as Minerva to

142 The importance of play was being discussed in books of advice to parents. See, for example, William H. G. Kingston, *Infant Amusements* (Griffith and Farran, 1867). Kingston (1814-1880) advocates play and physical activity as a means to promote the happiness of children.

143 Walter Crane, *Slateandpencilvania* (Marcus Ward & Co. Limited, 1885). Walter Crane, *Little Queen Anne* (Marcus Ward and Co. Limited, 1886). Walter Crane, *Pothooks and perseverance* (Marcus Ward & Co. Limited, 1886). Crane’s brother Thomas worked as Art Director for Marcus Ward. See Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 159. Price advertised in *The Standard*, 27 November 1886, p. 4.

144 Walter Crane, *A romance of the Three Rs.* (Marcus Ward & Co. Limited, 1886). Price in ‘Advertisements and Notices’, *The Pall Mall Gazette*, 16 December 1887. Crane explains in his preface: ‘[...] if wishes were horses, this book should be, in the spirit of its cover-device, a Pegasus to all little passengers aspiring to run, and read, or write’.



Fig. 5.32 Crane, *A romance of the Three Rs* (Marcus Ward, 1886), cover. NAL B.L.A. CRAW.RO.1886 (REN). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.33 Crane, 'Lancelot his book' 1883-4, 'he sets out'. © Senate House Library, University of London, Special Collections, MSS Sterling Library, SLIV/71, 1883-1884



Fig. 5.34 Crane, *Slate and Pencilvania* (Marcus Ward, 1885), 'after a severe squall'. NAL 60.W.128. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.35 Crane, *Pothooks and perseverance* (Marcus Ward, 1886], 'A-B'. NAL 862.AA.0083 (REN). © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.36 Crane, *Little Queen Anne* (Marcus Ward, 1886), 'Minerva'. NAL 60.C.9. © Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

go to a ball and is greeted by twenty-six letters of the alphabet dressed as pages. As the imaginary goddess of wisdom she must read about history, geography, music, art, and poetry, as well as learning grammar. She is even taught about science when she turns off the lamp at night. The girl must learn to read by climbing the long flight of (one-syllable) word steps, in order to meet her favourite fairy tale characters shown on the facing page (Fig. 5.36). Crane thus shows that learning can be made into an imaginative game, but that effort reaps reward.

The adventures of Percy and Dick take them on military expeditions, or on voyages to distant shores, reflecting the imperial motif in contemporary boys' fiction, but despite Anne's portrayal as a female warrior dressed in classical armour (thus seeming to promote the idea of a powerful empress), her fantasy keeps her within a domestic environment inhabited by the characters from fairy tales.¹⁴⁵ Crane thus betrays a Victorian attitude to gender stereotypes in the differentiation of male and female roles in the stories.¹⁴⁶ Crane adopts the conventional moral trope about effort in lessons being rewarded in each of the books, but he promotes new educational theories about useful play, rather than learning by rote. Lewis Carroll (Charles Ludwidge Dodgson, 1832-1898) had ridiculed pedestrian methods of teaching reading, writing and arithmetic in *Alice's adventures in Wonderland* (1865), and there are echoes of Carroll's fantasy narrative in Crane's heavy punning and use of imagery (the child washed up on the shore, the nursery-rhyme settings and the girls waking from a dream). Nevertheless, Crane was the first author to create a picture story about the difficulties children face in early learning.

Crane stimulates interest in the lessons through visual clues that the child can find on the page. Little Queen Anne's golden helmet is bedecked with a wise owl, and each character in the story has a costume covered in appropriate symbols; for example, the reading centurion has sandals made from stacked books held on with leather straps,

145 For the values and aspirations expressed in Crane's books, see Joany Hichberger, 'Walter Crane's Children's Books and Mid-Victorian Attitudes to Childhood', in *Walter Crane, 1845-1915: Artist, Designer and Socialist*, ed. Greg Smith and Sarah Hyde (Lund Humphries, 1989), pp. 31-7.

146 The gender bias was noted in one review, which suggested *Slateandpencilvania* as a 'very clever and well drawn' book for little boys'. 'Christmas books and Christmas cards', *Myra's Journal of Dress and Fashion* (London), 1 December 1885.

and the writing page has a tunic covered in a pattern created from the letter 'l'. In *Slateandpencilvania* the costumes of the natives are patterned with numerals, squares, circles, diamonds and other mathematical shapes and signs. In *PoTHOOKS and perseverance* Crane decorates the tablecloth, glasses and costumes with letters. These amusing details are designed to reinforce the idea that learning to read, write and count is like playing a game of recognition of shapes, signs and symbols.¹⁴⁷

Crane based the fantasy stories on his own children's experience of learning to read. The fluid illustrative style and use of word play show similarities with the homemade books the artist created for his family, which often show children engaged in imaginative play. For instance, the cover illustrations for *Romance of the Three Rs* appears to derive from an illustration in 'Lancelot his book' ([1883-4]), showing Crane's son riding his hobbyhorse at the start of a playtime adventure, dressed in military uniform (Figs. 5.32-5.33, p. 275).¹⁴⁸ The considerable number of surviving 'black books' demonstrates that Crane fully engaged with his children's education.¹⁴⁹

Not everyone was gratified by Crane's attempt at novelty, although the *Birmingham Daily Post* thought them 'lavish in their wealth of invention, ingenuity, and humour', the *Liverpool Mercury* thought the 'high-class nursery books' couldn't be

147 Crane, *Line and Form*, p. 4.

148 Illustration 'he sets out', in 'Lancelot his book' [1883-4], MSS Senate House Library, University of London, Sterling Library Illustrated Manuscripts, SLIV/71. The notebook, measuring 23 x 17cm (the typical size of the 'black books', so called because of their style), contains a series of 38 pen-and-ink drawings showing a small boy's expedition to meet seasonal characters (such as Guy Fawkes, Jack Frost, and Father Christmas); after many mock battles he lands on an island made of sweets.

149 Crane created home made books for four of his children: Beatrice (b. 1873); Lionel (b. 1876); Lancelot (1880-1915); and Myvanwy (1888-1891) (the Cranes' third son born in 1881 did not survive his first year). They featured family and pets as story characters, often incorporating simple lessons in a humorous style. Crane mentions the manuscript books as part of his children's work in the *Imprint*, p. 85. The only 'black book' published in Crane's lifetime was *Legends for Lionel in pen and pencil by Walter Crane* (London; Paris; NY; Melbourne: Cassell & Company Ltd, 1887). For facsimile reproductions see: *Mr Michael Mouse unfolds his tale* (New Haven: Yale University Library, 1956), and *Beatrice Crane her book: (the 2nd)* (Toronto: The Friends of the Osborne and Lillian H. Smith Collections, 1983; Plow and Watters). Several UK libraries hold unpublished black book manuscripts: Senate House Library, University of London: 'Beatrice Crane Her Book', April 1880, SLIV/69; 'Beatrice's Painting Book, 30 January 1881, SLIV/70; 'Lancelot His Book', undated [1883-1884], SLIV/71; V&A NAL: 'Myvanwy's Minutes', [1890-1891], 862.AA.0042 (REN); Walter Crane Archive, The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester: unpublished picture books for Beatrice, Lionel and Lancelot, including portfolio of Black Book illustrations: Handel (3), Weathercock (1), Lancelot (3), and Black Book, Album – 34 disbound pages, many family caricatures, WCA/1/1/1/4. For a list of almost 30 manuscript books held in Houghton Library, Harvard University, and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, see Spencer, *Walter Crane*, pp. 202-3.

bettered and the *Glasgow Herald* felt *Romance of the Three Rs* was ‘nothing short of perfection’.¹⁵⁰ Once again, *Punch* went to town, with its exuberant and entirely positive alliterative review:

A rare, right-rollickful, refreshing, radiant romance, in which the rough road of student of the Three Rs is rendered rosy by the clever fancy and the skilful pencil of WALTER CRANE.¹⁵¹

The *Romance of the Three Rs* series, with its ‘play upon words and meanings’ introduced the concept of imaginative learning to the nursery, challenging conventional methods of teaching.¹⁵² Each of the books highlights the difficulties that young children face in learning to read, write and count, but shows how play can be used in early education. Crane’s inventive use of letter symbols showed that decorative design could be successfully employed as an aid to literacy in a highly amusing way.

The golden primer

Crane’s visual approach to learning attracted academic interest and he was approached to collaborate with some of the leading reading specialists to produce graded schemes for use at home and in schools. With Professor John Miller Dow Meiklejohn (1836-1902), author of reading textbooks and a vociferous critic of government directives on teaching methods, he produced *The golden primer* (1884-5).¹⁵³ The high-quality, colour-illustrated scheme published by Blackwood

150 ‘Christmas Books’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, ‘Christmas Books’, 21 December 1886. ‘Christmas Publications’, *Liverpool Mercury*, 9 December 1886. ‘Christmas Books and Annuals’, *Glasgow Herald*, 23 December 1886. Crane was ‘by no means at his best’ in *Slateandpencilvania* in the opinion of the *Magazine of Art*, 9 January 1886, p. [v]. ‘The pictures [in *Slateandpencilvania*] are spirited and even funny, but hardly worthy of the artist’, according to *The Saturday Review*, 21 November 1885, p. 691. Seemingly writing in response, the *Athenaeum* found Crane’s *Romance* titles to be ‘worthy of the artist’, adding ‘it would be difficult to bestow higher praise upon them. They are entirely in his best vein.’ ‘Christmas Books’, *Athenaeum*, 11 December 1886.

151 ‘Turning over New Leaves’, *Punch*, 25 December 1886; p. 309.

152 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 9.

153 Professor J. M. D. Meiklejohn and Walter Crane, *The golden primer. Part I* (London & Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, [1884]). Professor, J. M. D., Meiklejohn and Walter Crane, *The golden primer. Part II* (London & Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, [1885]). Meiklejohn’s textbooks included *The English Method of Teaching to Read* (1869), a popular reading course for nursery schools, which remained in print until the end of the century. See J. E. G. de Montmorency, rev. by M. C. Curthoys, ‘Meiklejohn, John Miller Dow (1836-1902)’, *ODNB*. Meiklejohn criticised Government directives in J. M. D. Meiklejohn, *The Fundamental Error in the Revised Code* (E. Standard, 1870).

& Sons, was issued in two parts costing 3s. 6d. each.¹⁵⁴ A combined gift edition of the beautifully illustrated primer, which had gilt-edged pages, was issued for Christmas 1885.¹⁵⁵

Like the school inspector Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), Meiklejohn was concerned that many children left school unable to read proficiently, and criticised the calibre of teachers.¹⁵⁶ He rejected the ‘spelling out’ method because he felt that the alphabet represented an unreliable guide to word recognition, and was critical of the libraries of little books produced by publishers in response to government ideas on monosyllabic reading (for example, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Sandford and Merton*, and *The pilgrim’s progress*).¹⁵⁷ He approached Crane to explain his idea for a visually oriented primer:

He had a scheme for a primer embodying a method of teaching to read by associating words with the objects they signify, and without forcing a child to learn the series of misleading and cumbrous sounds [,] which represent the letters of the alphabet.¹⁵⁸

The golden primer, which promoted the whole word method, was designed to reform teaching in the classroom and provide a simple primer for mothers to teach their children at home; it included notes on how to encourage children to read (Fig. 5.38).¹⁵⁹ Crane’s decorative pictures helped children to recognise the pattern formed by the word and to understand its connections with the text through pictorial representation. The educational value of Crane’s pictures is underlined in

154 Advertised in *The Standard*, 11 December 1884, p. 4; *Athenaeum*, 6 December 1884, p. 717.

155 J. M. D. Meiklejohn and Walter Crane, *The golden primer parts I & II* (London & Edinburgh: Blackwood & Sons, 1885).

156 Meiklejohn cites an article by Matthew Arnold (1822-1888), published in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, 28 December 1869, which raised concerns about reading standards. See *Fundamental Error in the Revised Code*, p. 24. Meiklejohn believed that teaching of the alphabet, which he considered the most difficult teaching task, was being left to ‘the most ignorant and thoughtless and youngest of school staff’. See J. M. D. Meiklejohn, *Chair of Education, University of St. Andrews: Inaugural Address* (Edinburgh: R. M. Cameron, 1876), p. 9.

157 Meiklejohn had observed that the types of reading books used in schools were ‘settled by book makers, publishers and the “feeling” of inspectors’. Meiklejohn, *Fundamental Error in the Revised Code*, p. 29. For his criticism of books in monosyllables see p. 18. For an example of the books criticized, see Mary Godolphin, *Sandford and Merton in words of one syllable* (London and NY: Cassell, Pether and Galpin, [1868]).

158 See Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 198. Crane met Meiklejohn at the Savile Club, a meeting place that attracted artists and writers.

159 Meiklejohn held the view that women make the best teachers of young children, because they have a better understanding of the mind of the child. See J. M. D. Meiklejohn, *The Training of Teachers* (Edinburgh: Printed by John Lindsay, [1888?]), p. 4.



Fig. 5.37 Meiklejohn and Crane, *The golden primer*, I (William Blackwood, [1884-1885]), cover. NAL B.KB.MEIJ. GO.1885 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.38 Meiklejohn and Crane, *The golden primer*, I (William Blackwood, [1884]), 'Method of teaching'. NAL 60.W.142. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Figs. 5.39-5.40 Meiklejohn and Crane, *The golden primer*, I (William Blackwood, [1884]), title page and preface. NAL 60.W.142. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Meiklejohn's prefatory address to parents:

In this little book ART comes to fix the child's attention; SCIENCE to guide his steps. Pictures, words in the pictures, words out of the pictures – words in sentences: this is the first Ladder to Learning.

Crane's decorative cover and title page designs take up Meiklejohn's image of the ladder of learning, a common trope in early education (Figs. 5.37 and 5.39).¹⁶⁰ His witty tailpiece illustration for the preface depicts the author and artist as children bowing to their audience as if in a game: the professor is dressed up in cap and gown balancing a giant quill under his arm; Crane is decked in feathered costume with crane-beaked hat, wielding a giant pencil in one hand and artist's palette and brushes in the other (Fig. 5.40). The creators of the book are thus shown bringing themselves down to child level.

Crane's illustrations add humour to Meiklejohn's text. For example, in the reading lesson about Pat and his cat, a sequence of pictures shows how the boy tries to engage the family pet in a game, but is knocked over when the cat tries to escape.¹⁶¹ Crane draws guiding lines for the printed words (as in a writing exercise book) to create the design, using them to separate the different elements of the picture, and as a platform on which to seat the baby (Fig. 5.41). In several of the illustrations Crane treats the letters as symbols, demonstrating his theory of design as a form of picture writing: 'Writing, after all, is but a simpler form of drawing, and we know that the letters of our alphabet were originally pictures or symbols'.¹⁶² For example, in the lesson introducing the rhyming words hop, top, mop, pop, sop and lop, Crane uses the common letter 'o' to form six circular frames for his illustrations, and the suffix 'op' to form decorative borders and ogee ornaments in the design

¹⁶⁰ Trimmer used the idea in *The ladder to learning* ([E. Newbery, 1790?]), (sometimes attributed to Fenn) and its use in titles was common. Crane used a similar design with a mother helping children to climb a ladder for the cover of the prospectus for Louise Michel's International School in Fitzroy. Crane was fired by her radical socialist ideas for liberal education. See Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 258-9.

¹⁶¹ *The golden primer: Part I*, pp. 6-7.

¹⁶² Crane, *Line and Form*, p. 4. Morna O'Neill suggests that Crane had probably encountered Isaac Taylor's *The Alphabet: An Account of the Origin and Development of Letter* (1883), which asserts that writing and pictorial art derived from a common origin. Morna O'Neill, *Walter Crane: The Arts and Crafts, Painting, and Politics, 1875-1890* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 117.



Fig. 5.41 Meiklejohn and Crane, *The golden primer*, I (Blackwood & Sons, [1884]), pp. 6-7. NAL B.KB.MEIJ.GO.1884 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.42 Meiklejohn and Crane, *The golden primer*, I (Blackwood & Sons, [1884]), 'hop, top', p. 24. NAL B.KB.MEIJ.GO.1884 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.43 Meiklejohn and Crane, *The golden primer*, II (Blackwood & Sons, [1885]), 'king, sing', p. 20. NAL B.KB.MEIJ.GO.1885 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

(Fig. 5.42).¹⁶³ Crane's decorative pictures help the child to recognise the pattern formed by the word (the shape of the whole word, or part of word), and to understand its connection with the text through the pictorial representation.¹⁶⁴

Crane used a variety of styles to engage children's interest, including full-page narrative illustrations, decorated letters, and detailed panel pictures for children to study. For example, in the lesson using the 'Sing a song of sixpence' rhyme Crane creates a central picture of the birds being released from the pie set before the king and queen, framing it above and below two panels illustrating other details from the rhyme (Fig. 5.43).¹⁶⁵ He incorporates rhyming words extracted from the text (wing, bring, king, sing, string) to show their connection with the characters, objects and actions in the illustrations. At Meiklejohn's request, Crane drew the pictures on a large scale (146 x 191 cm), for use in his lectures for trainee teachers, in which he promoted the educational philosophies of Johann Comenius (1592-1670), Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Froebel and other pedagogic reformers who advocated visual learning.¹⁶⁶ The illustrations were then reduced in size when printed in the book.¹⁶⁷ The template banner for Meiklejohn's lectures, titled 'Professor Meiklejohn's Lecture On Teaching to Read, with Walter Crane's Illustrations at', shows a baby professor reading the text held by a crane, underlining the symbiotic relationship between artist and educator as co-creators of the book (Fig. 5.44).¹⁶⁸

The golden primer received generous praise in the press when it appeared in the bookshops.¹⁶⁹ The *Academy* called it the 'gift book of the season' and

163 Meiklejohn, *The golden primer*, I, pp. 24-5.

164 Crane had developed this design feature in *The baby's own Æsop*, creating pictorial representations of words in decorative letters.

165 Meiklejohn, *The golden primer*, II, pp. 20-1.

166 Meiklejohn encouraged young teachers to read Robert Quick (1831-1891), whose *Essays on Educational Reformers* (1868) had become a classic text on pedagogic theory. See *Inaugural Address*, p. 13.

167 Crane notes Meiklejohn's request in *Reminiscences*, p. 199.

168 See 'Proof of "Professor Meiklejohn's Lecture on Teaching to Read, with Walter Crane's Illustrations"', Walter Crane Archive Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester: WCA.1.8.120.

169 It was seen as a 'new departure' in reading by the *Liverpool Mercury*, 20 December 1884, 'Christmas Publications'; *The Derby Mercury*, 24 December 1884, considered Crane's illustrations 'admirably calculated to impress children (who are most readily taught through the eye)'; *The Leeds Mercury*, 31 December 1884, considered Crane had 'emphasise[d] the lessons in a very pretty manner'.

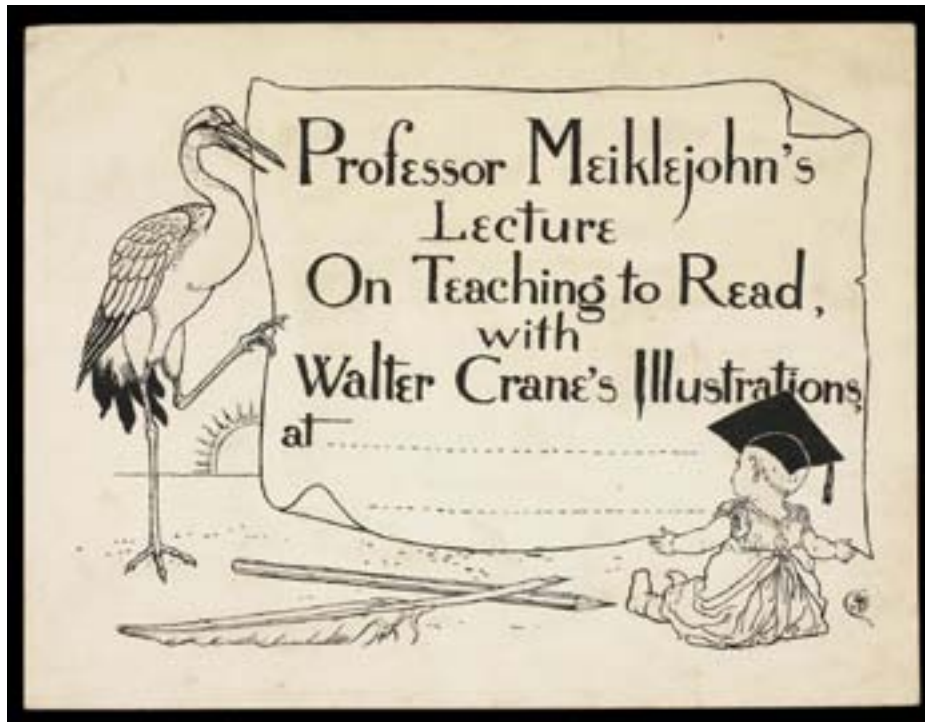


Fig. 5.44 Proof of 'Professor Meiklejohn's Lecture on Teaching to Read, with Walter Crane's Illustrations'. Walter Crane Archive, The Whitworth Art Gallery, The University of Manchester: WCA.1.8.120



Fig. 5.45 'Lancelot's levities', *Little Folks*, 27-28 (Cassell & Company, 1888), p. 7. NAL Uncatalogued 'Annual' (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

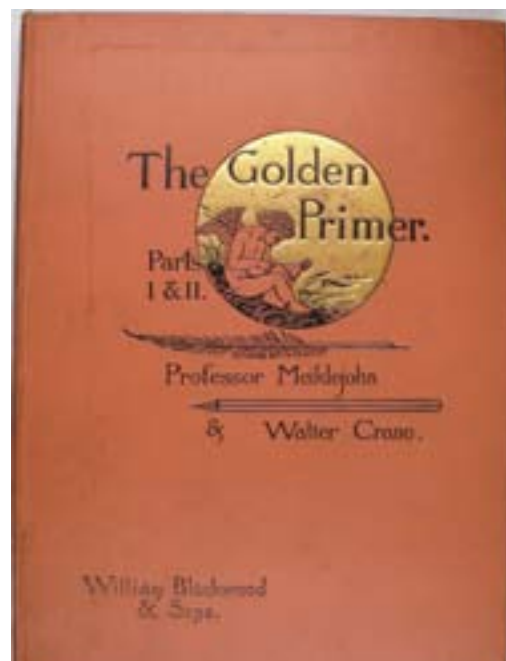


Fig. 5.46 Meiklejohn and Crane, *The golden primer. Parts I & II* (Blackwood & Sons, [ca. 1890]), cover. NAL 60.C.28. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

dubbed Crane ‘the prince of children’s artists’.¹⁷⁰ Crane’s pictures captured the public imagination and *Little Folks* magazine commissioned a humorous pictorial strip, ‘Lancelot’s Levities’, which he viewed as an opportunity for self-promotion (Fig. 5.45).¹⁷¹ The first episode featured the boy from *The golden primer* entering a giant copy of the book and climbing the ladder featured in the cover design.

John Bull applauded the new approach to reading:

Rarely, if ever, has any educational work appeared in choicer garb than that with which Mr. Walter Crane has invested Professor Meiklejohn’s new method of teaching the art of reading.¹⁷²

However, the reviewer wondered if the volume might be ‘too pretty for its purpose’.¹⁷³ In fact, *The golden primer* proved popular with teachers, and Blackwood reissued it as a single volume schoolbook with a new cover design and a more robust binding, perhaps to address criticism of its inadequacy for classroom use.¹⁷⁴ Crane’s new design for the cover featured a winged cherub seated within a golden orb, studiously reading a book (Fig. 5.46). A cheaper reissue (priced at 2s. 6d.), produced in 1911 under Meiklejohn’s own imprint, was still advertising it as a ‘Gift Book for the Nursery and Schoolroom Illustrated by Walter Crane’, showing that it continued to serve both markets.¹⁷⁵ The British Library’s 2010 nostalgic facsimile of *The golden primer* uses Crane’s colour title-page as the cover in place of the brown boards, to make it more appealing for today’s children; the fact that it is considered

170 ‘Gift Books’, *Academy*, 20 December 1884, p. 408, cited in Lundin, *Victorian Horizons*, p. 86 (116 n.).

171 ‘Lancelot’s Levities’, in *Little Folks, A Magazine for the Young*, 27-8 (London; Paris; NY; Melbourne: Cassell and Company Limited, [1888]), pp. 5-7. Crane wrote a similarly named manuscript book for his son, ‘Lancelot’s Levity Book’, which was listed for auction in a Catalogue of Children’s Books, Drawings and Juvenilia, 5 June 1973, No. 68 Sotheby, Parke Bernet Inc., cited in Spencer, *Walter Crane*, p. 203.

172 *John Bull*, 17 January 1885, p. 49.

173 Ibid.

174 Professor [J. M. D.] Meiklejohn & Walter Crane, *The golden primer. Parts I & II* (William Blackwood & Sons, [ca 1890]). The ‘outward fabric’ of the book was considered unsuitable ‘to be subjected to the ordinary rough usage which primers must expect’. *John Bull*, 17 January 1885, p. 49. Examination of surviving copies suggests this was a valid criticism; the pages have become detached from the binding, undoubtedly because the thickness of the paper did not permit the book to remain open without exerting pressure on the spine.

175 Professor J. M. D. Meiklejohn and Walter Crane, *The golden primer* (Meiklejohn and Holden, 1911). *Athenaeum*, 4336, (3 December 1910), p. 714. *The Practical Teacher*, 31:7 (January 1911), p. 47. In a separate review in the same issue the journal deemed it to be ‘charmingly artistic, and educationally valuable’, p. 504.

marketable in the twenty-first century demonstrates the modernity of Crane's original designs.¹⁷⁶ Susan Tweedsmuir (née Grosvenor b.1882), wife of the writer John Buchan, enthused about *The golden primer* in her reminiscences, and vividly recalled the images: 'I learned to read in a book exquisitely illustrated by Walter Crane. It had pictures of cats on mats, and of boys with bats.'¹⁷⁷

The method of getting the child to look at the words as patterns, or shapes, was taken up by the educationist Helen Davidson in the 1930s in her 'word envelopes', in which the child has to recognise the outline of a word, rather than thinking about the letters that the words are made from; her approach was developed into the whole-word method, demonstrating further application of Crane's innovative idea.¹⁷⁸

The Walter Crane readers

Even more influential was the set of graded readers that Crane produced in association with the schoolteacher Nellie Dale, which introduced a radical new method of teaching using colour coded letters and picture cues, for home or school use.¹⁷⁹ J. M. Dent launched the four-part set, with an accompanying teaching guide in 1899, marketing it as the 'Walter Crane readers': *Steps to reading*, *The Walter Crane readers First primer*, *Second primer*, and *Infant reader*.¹⁸⁰ Crane's uniform cover design and title page show a mother helping a child on to a flight of steps; three other children have climbed to different levels, the eldest standing at the top of the steps waving a guiding flag. The paper case binding was produced in different colours (red, blue, yellow, and green), to represent the progressive grades, (Figs. 5.47-5.50). Crane's cover design was repeated on the colour printed title page (Fig. 5.51). The books, which featured chromolithographed illustrations on each

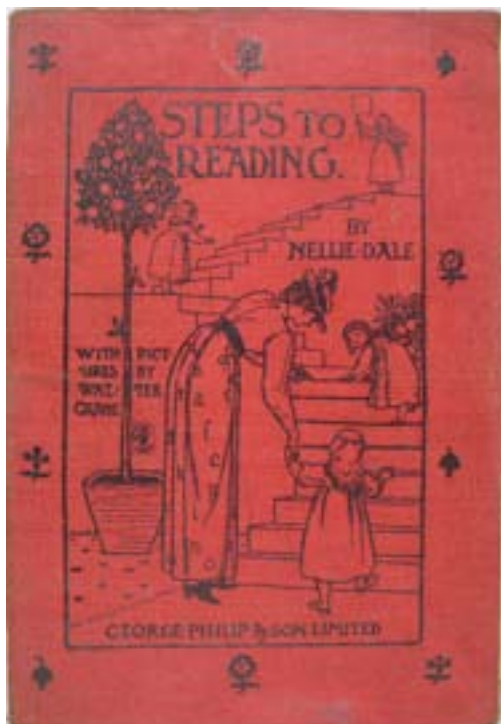
176 Professor J. M. D Meiklejohn and Walter Crane, *The golden primer* (London and Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, [1885]; repr. London: BL, 2010).

177 Susan Tweedsmuir, *The Lilac and the Rose* (Gerald Duckworth, 1952), p. 39.

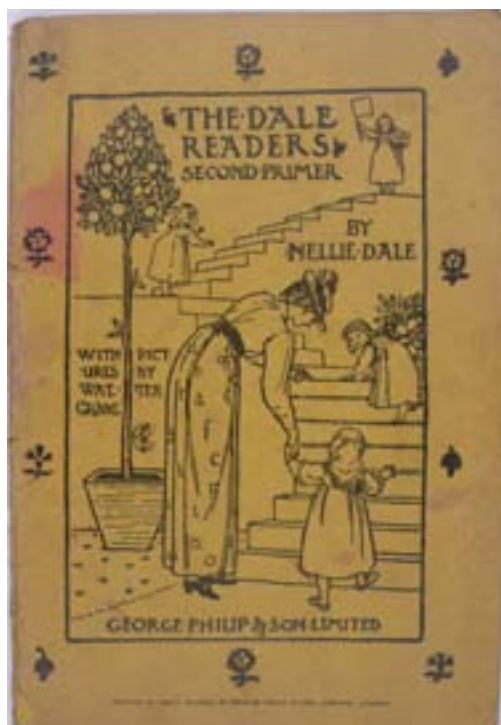
178 Jim Doyle, *Dyslexia: An Introductory Guide*, 2nd edn (London and Philadelphia: Whurr Publishing, 2005), pp. 57.

179 Ellen (Nellie) Dale (1865-1967) taught at Wimbledon High School for Girls, which accepted girls from the age of four. In her obituary it was reported that she ran her own school for many years. *The Times*, 24 February 1967.

180 N., Dale, *Steps to reading* (J. M. Dent & Co, [1899]). N. Dale, *The Walter Crane readers. First primer* (J. M. Dent & Co, [1899]); N. Dale, *The Walter Crane readers. Second primer* (J. M. Dent & Co, [1899]). N. Dale, *The Walter Crane Infant reader. Book I* (J. M. Dent & Co., [1899]). Nellie Dale, *On the Teaching of English Reading* (J. M. Dent & Co., 1898).



Figs. 5.47-5.50 Crane, cover designs for The Dale readers series, *Steps to reading*, *First primer*, *Second primer* and *Infant reader* (George Philip & Son, 1902). NAL 861.AA.4484 (REN); NAL 861.AA.4488 (REN); NAL 861.AA.4486 (REN); NAL 861.AA.5275 (REN). The series was first published in 1899 by Dent and Co. as the 'Walter Crane readers', with the same cover designs. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



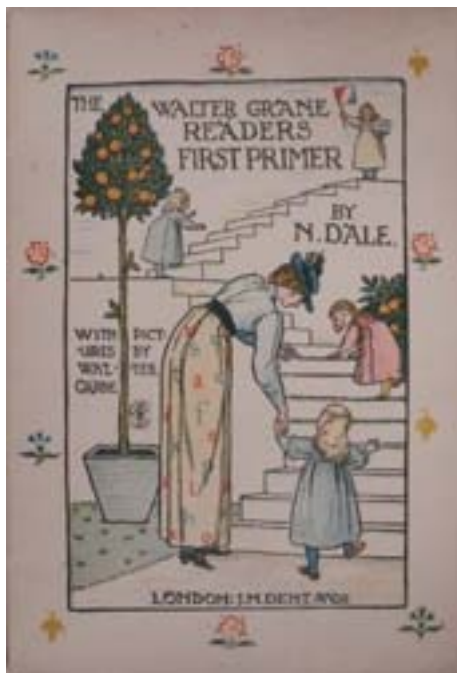


Fig. 5.51 *The Walter Crane readers. First primer* (J. M. Dent & Co., [1899]), title page. NAL 60.X.145. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 5.52 *Steps to reading* (George Philip & Son, [1902]), letter symbol card for pricking and embroidery, designed by Walter Crane. NAL 861.AA.4484 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

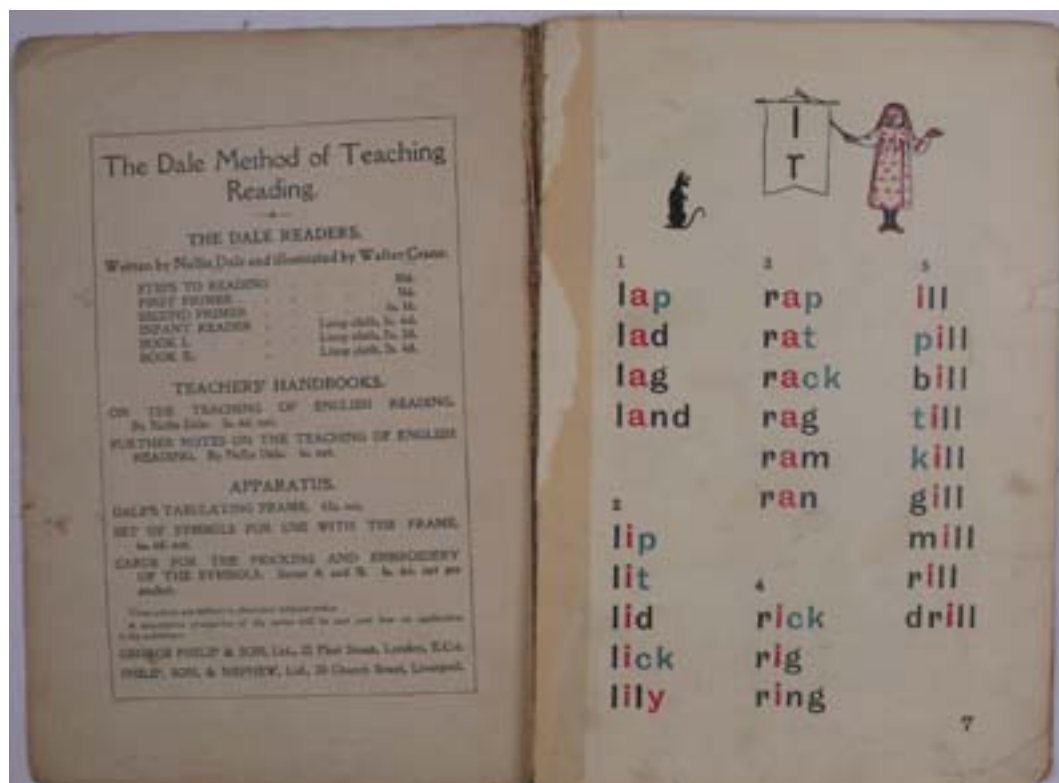


Fig. 5.53 *Steps to reading* (George Philip & Son, [1902]), advertisement and p. 7. NAL 861.AA.4484 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

page, were economically priced at between eight pence (*Steps to reading*), and 1s. 3d. (*Infant reader*).¹⁸¹ Dale's principle, 'to maintain the interest by pictures of everything mentioned in the lesson', matched perfectly with Crane's view that good art should be brought to the classroom.¹⁸²

Crane's involvement in the pioneering scheme secured its success, and it attracted many reviews. *The Saturday Review* remarked:

There is at last something real in the way of primary education, when an artist of Mr. Walter Crane's standing is willing to apply his mind to elementary readers.¹⁸³

Dale's phonetic method was designed so that '*the eye should help the ear*', with colour coded prompts: blue for soundless consonants; black for voiced consonants; yellow for silent consonants; and the unobstructed vowel sounds in red to signal their difficulty, as shown in the example from *Steps to reading* (Fig. 5.53).¹⁸⁴ Dale's originality in promoting the use of colour as a teaching aid is often cited in guides to dyslexia.¹⁸⁵ Writing in his introduction to Dale's accompanying teaching guide, the respected academic H. Frank Heath (1863-1946) endorsed the new visual method:

[...] the production of this series will furnish artistic training of the highest value. The education of both eye and ear which this system ensures brings with it careful habits and a sense for accuracy.¹⁸⁶

Heath's comments demonstrate that pictures were now considered an essential element in early reading.

181 The V&A NAL note the chromolithographed illustrations. For example, see the catalogue entry for Nellie Dale, *The Dale readers. First primer* (George Philip & Son, [1902]) V&A NAL 861.AA.4488 (REN).

182 Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 443.

183 "On the teaching of English Reading", The Walter Crane Readers', *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, 18 February 1899, p. 218.

184 Dale, *On the teaching of English reading*, p. 10. Dale was against the spelling reform (suggested by Meiklejohn, amongst others), in which new phonetic spelling should be introduced; her view was that children simply needed help in identifying the different types of sounds. *Ibid.*, p. 10. For consideration of Dale's method see Diack, *In Spite of the Alphabet*, pp. 37-9, and Doyle, *Dyslexia: An Introductory Guide*, pp. 59-60.

185 Doyle, *Dyslexia*, pp. 59-60.

186 Frank H. Heath, 'Preface', in Dale, *On the Teaching of English Reading*, p. xv. At the time, Heath was assistant registrar and librarian of London University and editor of *Modern Languages Quarterly*, but in 1901 became director of special enquiries for the Board of Education. See Peter Gosden, 'Heath, Sir (Henry) Frank (1863-1946)', *ODNB*.

The popular series, which received the immediate approval of a Government inspector, was quickly acquired by the educational publisher George Philip and Son, and expanded into a six-part reading scheme for the highly lucrative board school market, renamed as the ‘Dale readers’.¹⁸⁷ Two additional readers (*Book I* and *Book II*) were commissioned to provide more advanced reading practice, which advertised a new teaching guide and classroom apparatus (Fig. 5.53, p. 289).¹⁸⁸ The teaching aids included postcard-size alphabet cards illustrated by Crane, which were printed with a letter that children could prick out and sew (Fig. 5.52, p. 289).

In lesson one of *First primer*, Crane provides a visual representation of three short paragraphs of text, which are incorporated in the full-page illustration. The child protagonist is shown at different points in time (the illustrative technique used in the toy book *Puss in Boots*): Pat running up the hill with his dog; Pat sitting on a log with Snap napping on his lap; and Pat telling Tom that he will send him a pet rat (Fig. 5.54). Crane included a picture of his own fox-terrier at the request of the children he had consulted.¹⁸⁹ The pet dog, (named Snap) along with child characters in the books (such as Pat, Tom, Dan and Nan), created narrative interest in the exercises, and provided children with a recognisable link to their own lives. The characters were loved by children and provided an incentive for achievement; Dale reported that one child wanted to ‘move on to the blue book’ (*First primer*), so that she could bring her own dog like Snap to school.¹⁹⁰

In subsequent lessons Crane incorporates visual clues, placed in decorative panels (as in the Baby books), or in cameos placed within the text. Crane underlines

187 ‘A New Method of Teaching English’, in *The Practical Teacher*, 20:2 (August 1899), p. 74. Dale’s system was fully reviewed by the journal, whose reviewer noted its favourable reception by one of ‘Her Majesty’s Inspectors’. Crane reports that Dale had ‘remarkable success’ with *Steps to reading*, and that others in the series were in ‘great demand’. *Reminiscences*, p. 443. George Philip and Son had been supplying textbooks and teaching equipment since 1870, when the board schools were introduced to provide national council-funded education. See Harold Fullard, ‘Philip, George (1800-1882)’, *ODNB*.

188 Nellie Dale, *The Dale readers in continuation of “The Walter Crane readers”*. *Book I* (London and Liverpool: George Philip & Son, 1902). The new title was advertised at 1s. See *Saturday Review*, 11 October 1902, p. 470. Nellie Dale, *The Dale readers. Book II* (London & Liverpool: George Philip & Son, 1907). Nellie Dale, *Further Notes on the Teaching of English Reading* (London and Liverpool: George Philip & Son, 1902) The apparatus included a ‘tabulating frame’, a set of picture symbols, and embroidery cards printed with the letters of the alphabet, designed by Crane. See Fig. 5.52 for a rare example of the letter cards.

189 Dale, *On the Teaching of English Reading*, p. 82.

190 Nellie Dale, *Further Notes on the Teaching of English Reading*, p. 62.

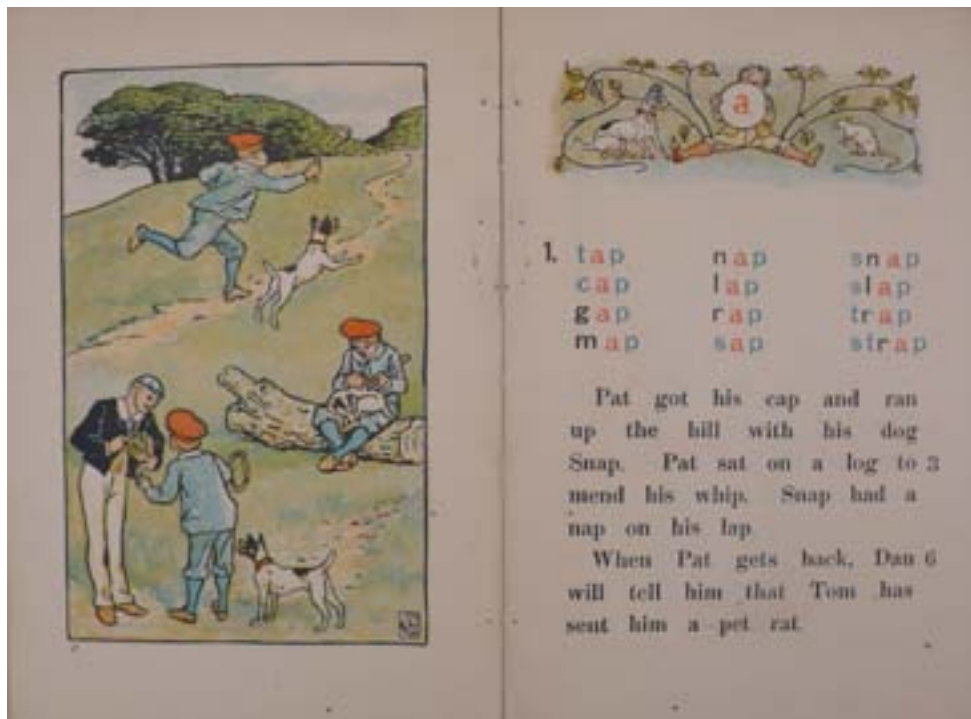


Fig. 5.54 *The Walter Crane readers. First primer* (J. M. Dent & Co., [1899]), lesson one. NAL 60.X.145. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

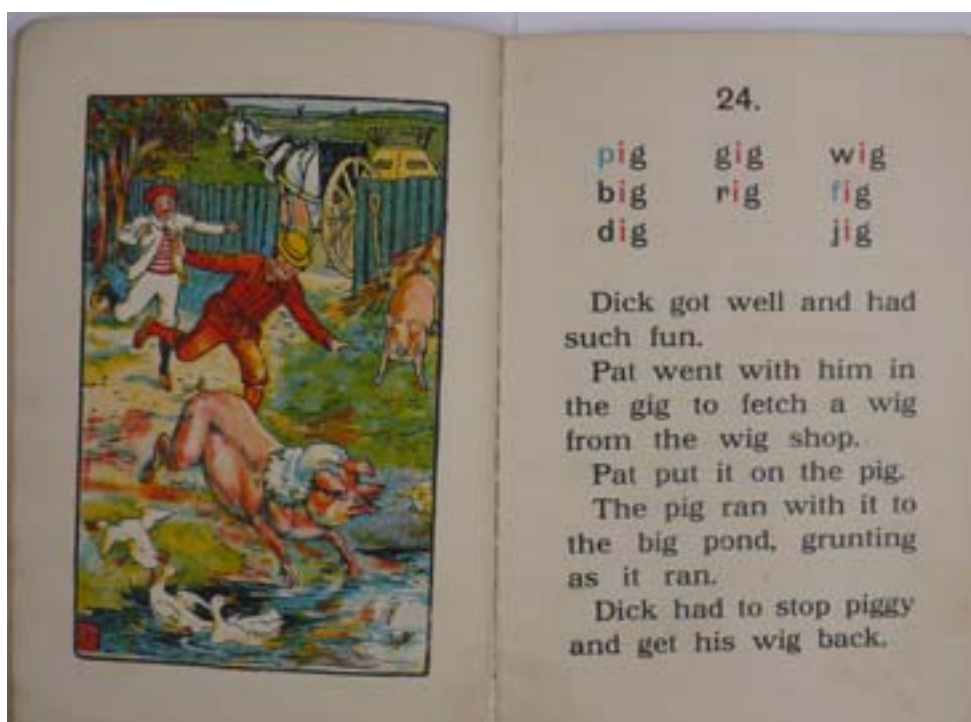


Fig. 5.55 *The Dale readers. First primer* (Philip & Son, [1902]), lesson 24. NAL 861. AA.4486 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

the humour of Dale's stories in his illustrations; for example, in lesson twenty-four of *Second primer*, in which the children have fun dressing a pig in a wig and then chasing after it (Fig. 5.55), or *Book I*, where cartoons are introduced into the humorous story about performing animals (p. 23). The effective interaction of author and illustrator in creating the narrative is demonstrated in the dialogue Dale imagines between Crane's invented dog, Snap, and a family cat called Puss.¹⁹¹

The *Glasgow Herald* commented: 'Everything is done here that beautiful pictures and coloured letters can do to enlist the interest and sympathy of children.'¹⁹² The *Athenaeum*, ever the champion of Crane's work, found the illustrations 'charming'.¹⁹³ A journalist writing in the Cardiff *Western Mail*, who compared various reading schemes, also thought Crane's illustrations were 'charmingly artistic', but had 'some misgivings' about the 'elaborate system'; nevertheless, he thought that 'some school boards with money to spare and unchecked by vigilant ratepayers might make the experiment'.¹⁹⁴

The pioneering scheme was endorsed and promoted by the London School Board.¹⁹⁵ By 1908 *The Journal of Education* was writing 'Miss Dale is now a classic and there is no need to explain her method. She could not have found a better partner than Mr. Walter Crane.'¹⁹⁶ Crane's illustrations withstood the test of time remarkably well and saw the series right through to the Second World War, although outmoded fashions necessitated modifications to the pictures. For example, in the 1935 edition of *Steps to reading* the original mother and children dressed in Victorian clothes have been removed from the cover and title-page to leave a blank step, and on page two, the father's top hat and Gladstone bag have been replaced with a bowler and briefcase and a bright new motor car has been substituted for the horse and trap.¹⁹⁷

191 Dale, *Book I*, p. 5.

192 'School and University Books', *Glasgow Herald*, 11 February 1899.

193 'School Books', *The Athenaeum*, 27 May 1899, p. 656.

194 'Reading made Easy', [Cardiff] *Western Mail*, 7 June, 1899.

195 London School Board, *Final Report of the School Board for London 1870-1904* (P. S. King & Son, 1904), p. 100.

196 Review of *The Dale readers. Book II*, in *The Journal of Education*, 30 (1908), p. 41.

197 Nellie Dale, *Steps to reading* (George Philip & Son, 1935).

The popular series provided the model for later picture book reading schemes, such as the Janet and John series produced by O'Donnell and Munro in the late 1940s, the 'Ladybird Key Words Reading Scheme' in the 1960s, and the 'Oxford Reading Tree', which is still in use today. Both the Walter Crane Readers and *The golden primer* introduced more visual methods of reading that had been inspired by Crane's earlier book designs, transporting the idea of picture-book reading from the home nursery into the school classroom.

Summary

In this chapter I have demonstrated that Crane was one of the great innovators in the nursery market, who introduced the idea of decorative design as an aid to literacy. Crane proved to be Cole's successor in the promotion of good art and design in nursery literature. He demonstrated that aesthetic principles could be applied to cheap mass-market books, and as a popular artist helped to raise the profile of children's book illustrators, thus building on two of the initiatives that Cole had instigated in the Home Treasury.¹⁹⁸ F. G. Stephens, who had been a constant supporter of Crane's work as art critic of the *Athenaeum*, considered that Crane's toy books marked 'a new era' in picture books.¹⁹⁹ Sir William Rothenstein (1872-1945) remarked: 'Nowhere is the peculiar character of the mid-Victorian aesthetic movement better interpreted than in the children's picture books [of Crane]', and Jacqueline Overton concludes: 'The whole history of book-illustration owes a big debt to Walter Crane'.²⁰⁰ However, Crane's relationship with commercial work was highly complex; like Cole, he wanted to educate the public to love beauty, and adopted the moral high ground in promoting his cause, but as a commercial artist he

198 Crane paved the way for other Victorian illustrators to insist on proper accreditation and remuneration for their work. On his advice, Caldecott secured royalties from Routledge for his toy books. Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 183. Greenway was able to accumulate a small fortune from the royalties secured for her books. See, Frank Mumby, *The House of Routledge, 1834-1934*. (G. Routledge & Sons, 1934), p. 131.

199 F. G. Stephens, 'The Designs of Walter Crane', *The Portfolio*, 21 January 1890, p. 15. Cutting contained in 'E. J. Horniman: Collection of Cuttings, Papers, Articles, etc. relating to Walter Crane', V&A NAL 86.Y.48 (Special Collections). Crane notes that as art critic of the *Athenaeum* Stephens welcomed his children's books and was probably the first to recognise their aim. *Reminiscences*, p. 212. Lundin observes that Crane and his contemporaries Caldecott and Greenaway were extolled in the journals 'because they represented the height of both art and industry', and notes the power of the critics as 'agents of diffusion and canonization'. Lundin, *Victorian Horizons*, p. 237.

200 Rothenstein cited in David Gerard, *Walter Crane and the Rhetoric of Art* (Nine Elms Press, [c. 1999]), p. 6. Jacqueline Overton, 'Illustrators of the Nineteenth Century in England', in *Illustrators of Children's Books 1744-1945*, ed. Bertha E. Mahony, Louise P. Latimer and Beulah Folmsbee (Boston: The Horn Book Inc., 1947; repr. Godalming: B. F. Stevens & Brown, 1970), 25-86, (p. 66).

was constantly being reminded that profit was the primary concern of the publishers, rather than a cultural ideal.²⁰¹

Many of the revolutionary changes Crane influenced were facilitated by new developments in technology, but not determined by it. Evans had identified that new colour technology would enable higher standards to be achieved, but he needed Crane's artistic talent to exploit the possibilities that it presented.²⁰² However, Bewick's technique of wood engraving was found preferable to the more modern method of chromolithography, showing the progress did not always ensure artistic results, as Cole had found earlier. Crane's case study thus typifies what Robert L. Heilbroner refers to as 'soft determinism' in relation to the way that technological advances affected growth and change in industry; Heilbroner observes that machines 'reflect, as much as mould, the social relationships of work'.²⁰³

Crane embraced the ideals of the Aesthetic movement, and increasingly came to view art as a 'refining influence' in society; he believed its absence would result in 'coarseness, brutality, and degradation'.²⁰⁴ As a leading light in both the Art Workers Guild and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, he helped to promote the work of craftsmen in design, raising the profile of commercial book artists.²⁰⁵ He also held key posts in three influential art schools (Manchester, Reading and the

201 For Crane's attitude to commercialism, see Greg Smith, 'Developing a Public Language of Art', and Sarah Hyde, 'The Production of Walter Crane's Children's Books', in *Walter Crane 1845-1915: Artist, Designer and Socialist*, ed. Smith and Hyde, pp. 13-23, 24-30. In addition to Crane's disputes with Routledge noted earlier in this chapter, he had a further spat over their use of his pictures in William Routledge, *The children's musical Cinderella* (London; NY: George Routledge and Sons, 1879). See Crane's letter disclaiming responsibility for the title, 'Cinderella', *Athenaeum*, 28 December 1878, p. 859. He also sent a letter of complaint to John Lane, who in 1914 published three miniature editions of the toys books reformatted as easy readers, coloured 'by another hand', cited in Spencer, *Walter Crane*, p. 60. Crane assigned the toy book rights for £300, but bitterly regretted his decision.

202 Muir notes that Evans needed to find a competent artist to design a complete book that could be printed in full colour throughout and sold at a low price, and that Crane enabled him to execute his 'far-reaching ideas'. Muir *Victorian Illustrated Books*, p. 158.

203 Heilbroner appropriates William James' label for the effect that machines have on social relations. See Robert L. Heilbroner, 'Do machines make history?', in *Does Technology Drive History?*, ed. by Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx (Cambridge, MA and London: The MIT Press, 1996, first published 1994), 53-65, (p. 61).

204 Walter Crane, *Ideals in Art*, p. 97. Crane had been inspired by Ruskin's idea of 'art for all', but took issue with his views on elementary education, believing that books for the young should have an instructive, as well as an aesthetic purpose. See Spencer, *Walter Crane*, p. 78.

205 Crane served as Master of the Art Workers' Guild between 1887 and 1889. He drafted the aims and principles of the Society of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society (founded in 1888) and became its first President, alternating the post of Principal with William Morris. Crane, *Reminiscences*, 'Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society', pp. 299-302, 416, 466. See also Alan Crawford, 'Crane, Walter (1845-1915)', *ODNB*.

Royal College of Art) during the 1890s where he encouraged artists in the study of decorative art and design; his lectures and design manuals were enormously influential at the time, and are still consulted by artists and designers today.²⁰⁶ In addition to Caldecott and Greenaway, other Victorian artists, such as Henry Justice Ford (1861-1941), illustrator of Andrew Lang's popular fairy books, and Leslie Brook (1862-1940), who succeeded Crane as illustrator of Mrs Molesworth's books, learned from his techniques.²⁰⁷ Crane's influence remains evident in the intricate illustration and decorative features of modern picture books creators, such as Janet and Allan Ahlberg.²⁰⁸

Late twentieth-century picture book analysts, such as Perry Nodelman, Judith Graham and David Lewis, have examined the ways in which young readers interact with pictorial texts, but Crane was already demonstrating his knowledge of picture-book theory more than a hundred years earlier.²⁰⁹ As a young man Crane seems to have understood the value of art and design instinctively, but in later life he was able to articulate the theory that underpinned his work:

From the great universal storehouse every artist after his kind quarries out his material. Years of work and experiment teach him its properties and give him facility in dealing with it, until he finally forms from it the speech and language which seems to him best fitted to embody and convey to the world what he has in his eye and mind.²¹⁰

206 Crane was Director of Design at Manchester School of Art from 1893 to 1896, Director of Art at Reading University from 1896-1899, and Principal of the Royal College of Art 1899-1900. Crane, *Reminiscences*, p. 441-2. Textbooks based on Crane's lectures included *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books Old and New* (1896), *The Bases of Design* (1898) and *Ideals in Art* (1905).

207 See, for example, Caldecott's *Hey, diddle, diddle* and *Baby Bunting* (George Routledge & Sons, [1882]) which resembles Crane's drawings in *The absurd ABC* (1874). Greenaway's pastoral illustrations in *Under the window* (George Routledge & Sons, 1879) were inspired by *Baby's opera*. She also illustrated copycat book of rhymes set to music, Myles Birket Foster, *A day in a child's life* (London & NY: George Routledge and Sons, 1881). For the effect of Crane's work on Ford, see Carolyn Hares Stryker, 'Doing Justice to Henry: A Biographical Study of Henry Justice Ford', *Imaginative Book Illustration Society Studies in Illustration*, 43 (2009), 27-64 (p. 41). Crane's influence on Brook is explored by Eileen Leach, 'Walter Crane and after: A Century of Changing Fashions in the Illustration of Children's Books, 1865-1965', unpublished thesis submitted for Fellowship of the Library Association, 1966, pp. 22, 76.

208 See the Ahlbergs' *Peepo!* (1981), *The baby's catalogue* (1982) and *The jolly pocket postman* (1995).

209 See for example: Uri Shulevitz, *Writing with Pictures* (NY: Watson Guptill, 1985); Perry Nodelman, *Words About Pictures* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988); Judith Graham, *Pictures on the Page* (Sheffield: The National Association for the Teaching of English, 1990; repr. 1995); *Talking Pictures*, ed. Victor Watson and Morag Styles (Hodder & Stoughton, 1996); David Lewis, *Reading Contemporary Picturebooks* (RoutledgeFalmer, 2001). For discussion of other picture book analysts in relation to Crane, see Hutton, 'Walter Crane and the Decorative Illustration of Books', pp. 28-9.

210 Crane, *Easter Art Annual*, p. 32.

Crane's high-quality baby books opened up an entirely new sector of the nursery market, and his novel educational series, *A romance of the Three Rs*, raised awareness of the psychological aspects of children's learning. Along with the toy books, these innovative nursery books influenced new thinking about how children should learn to read, and laid the foundations for the modern picture book. The adoption of Crane's visual ideas in school reading schemes demonstrates his wide-reaching influence in children's early education.

It is remarkable when we view Crane's work today, to notice just how well it has withstood the test of time. Although some of the books betray their Victorian origins, many of the designs seem to be surprisingly modern in concept. This may explain why many of his books, including the fairy tales and *Baby* books, have been reissued throughout the twentieth century, and continue to entertain young readers today. Some of Crane's books have even been brought up to date for children to read as Kindle downloads.²¹¹

It is hard to overestimate the impact that Crane's innovative picture books must have had on the mid- to late Victorian publishing market, which for the most part was still conservative and persistently moral in its approach to children's early reading. In the next chapter I will be examining the effect that the picture book revolution had on long-running titles such as *Cobwebs*, in order to show how technological innovation, cultural transience, and changing views of childhood over the course of the nineteenth century, precipitated changes in the rapidly expanding children's market. These developments ultimately influenced the creation of a new model for reading in the twentieth century, which was radically different from that of the late eighteenth century.

211 See, for example, Kindle editions of *Baby's own Æsop* and *The frog prince and other stories*, available via Amazon.

CHAPTER SIX

Cobwebs to catch flies: a publishing case study

“Cobwebs to Catch Flies” is the title of one of those almost forgotten books for children which it is sometimes good to handle and examine if only for the sake of learning how small the distance we have travelled in the principles of the art of teaching children to read during the past hundred and fifty years.¹

Writing in 1901, just seven years after *Cobwebs* went out of print, Charles Welsh offered a bibliographical obituary for Fenn’s ‘progressive first reading-book for children’.² Believing that the ‘old-fashioned dialogue form’ might have ‘some advantages’ over modern readers, Welsh suggested *Cobwebs* needed ‘only slight revisions to admit of its taking rank with the more attractively produced books of the present day’.³ Indeed, this must have been the view of the many publishers who produced new editions of *Cobwebs*. However, the enduring popularity of the book during a period that witnessed such dramatic shifts in the concept of nursery reading is highly intriguing; it is therefore illuminating to look at the changes made to this text over the one hundred and twenty years that it remained in print. In this chapter I compare a sample of twenty-two copies from the seven London-based firms who published the title in England and America between 1783 and 1894. The examples are found in the V&A National Art Library, the British Library, the Institute of Education (London), and Toronto Public Library.

McKenzie’s sociological approach to textual criticism acknowledges that

[T]he physical book as a whole is a rich complex of signs, each of which has its own human history and all of which unite to *create* the ‘finished’ book as a palpably articulated ‘text’ (to *form* it, not *de-form* it).⁴

My analysis of *Cobwebs* supports McKenzie’s view that a close reading of these

1 Charles Welsh, ‘A Forgotten Primer and its Author’, *Athenaeum*, 20 July 1901, 94-5 (p. 94). Reprinted in *The Bibliographer*, I (1902), 190-4 (p. 191).

2 Welsh, *Athenaeum*, p. 94.

3 Ibid., p. 94.

4 D. F. McKenzie, ‘The Sociology of a Text’, in *The Book History Reader*, ed. David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, 2nd edn (London and NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 205-31 (p. 206). See also ‘Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts’, in McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, pp. 7-76.

‘signs’ enables us partially to ‘recreate the historical dynamics of [the book’s] making and reading’; it also demonstrates that the book has a ‘capacity for successive reincarnations in response to changing human needs’.⁵ In adopting this approach – which examines the apparent aims of the author, the illustrator and the publisher, along with evidence of the book’s reception – my intention is to discover how *Cobwebs* was reformulated for new audiences, and to make some judgement about why the book eventually went out of print.

My main focus has been to examine how *Cobwebs* would have appeared in the bookshop as an item for purchase, rather than to provide a bibliographical record for each copy. The basic text of *Cobwebs* was altered very little in its various editions, suggesting the enduring quality of Fenn’s stories. However, the material changes to the book – in type, illustration and binding – indicate that the publishers were keenly aware of the need to adapt the book to attract new generations of readers. Modification of the cover design, for example, usually coincided with the involvement of a different publishing firm – it was a relatively inexpensive way to make *Cobwebs* appear like a ‘new’ book. I first give a brief publishing history of the book before looking at these material changes, which reflect the different marketing approaches of the publishers. Appendix Two provides a summarised table of the key changes to the physical attributes of the book (such as the imprint, number of volumes, cover, pagination and illustration), as well as details of the selling price. I have compared the illustration of one story (‘The morning’) across editions, to highlight the way publishers updated the pictures to reflect contemporary ideas about education and the state of childhood.⁶ The case study of *Cobwebs* thus offers a unique perspective on the development of the nursery market over the course of the century, demonstrating how ideological shifts, as well as technological developments had an effect on the way that the book was marketed and consumed.

Appendix Three provides a list of more than sixty editions, or impressions of

⁵ McKenzie, ‘The Sociology of a Text’, p. 206.

⁶ I am grateful to Toronto Public Library for confirming publishing details of copies of the Frederick Warne and Co. editions of 1870 and 1894 held in the Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books, and for supplying photographs of the covers, title pages and illustrations of ‘The morning’ to enable comparison. Warne editions are not included in the detailed textual comparisons.

Cobwebs, adding new items to the preliminary checklist of editions compiled by David Stoker.⁷ Stoker describes dating the books as a ‘nightmare’ for the bibliographer, particularly because of the incomplete information in John Marshall’s early editions.⁸ It is clear that even leading academic libraries are sometimes unable accurately to estimate the date of an individual copy, which has rendered comparison of editions problematic.⁹ It has therefore been necessary to make a judgement about the dates of certain books to facilitate comparison. I give both the library catalogue date and my suggested date of publication in the analysis.

A brief publishing history of *Cobwebs*

It was common for publishers to reissue books many times, to capitalise on a revenue base that a secure title could provide.¹⁰ Marshall was responsible for more than a dozen editions, or impressions of *Cobwebs* through to the end of the 1820s, thus securing a steady income from sales for well over forty years.¹¹ Typical print runs for children’s books in the late eighteenth hundreds have been suggested as being between fifteen hundred to two thousand copies.¹² Further investigation is needed to establish more accurately what level of sales was being achieved. As shown in Chapter Two, *Cobwebs* was initially marketed as part of a comprehensive reading scheme, but the popular reader was the only component to become firmly rooted in the nursery market, almost certainly because by

7 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, pp. 15-19. Stoker does not distinguish between new editions and impressions in early editions of *Cobwebs*, as dating is problematic. Some entries on his list are suggested by advertisements or bibliographical references. For continuity of scholarship I have adopted this approach, which has the benefit of highlighting publishing activity. I have found more editions: John Marshall [1794?, catalogued ca. 1790], [1799?, catalogued [1783] (combined) and [1820?]; Routledge [1879]; and another published in America in 1819 under a different title. Advertisements suggest further Baldwin, Cradock and Joy editions, plus a Lockwood & Co edition of 1861. Additional copies are listed in Lawrence Darton, *The Dartons*, pp. 427-8, H581.

8 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 12. Marshall’s early editions are undated, not numbered, and often only one volume has survived. Stoker notes inadequate recording of *Cobwebs* in both the *English Short-Title Catalogue*, and the *Nineteenth-Century Short-Title Catalogue*. Ibid., p. 12.

9 For the ‘utter chaos’ relating to listings of Fenn’s works in library catalogues, see Stoker, ‘Establishing Lady Fenn’s Canon’, p. 47. In this chapter I provide examples of a Marshall edition at the V&A, a British Library SPCK edition, and the Institute of Education Library (IOE) volumes, which are incorrectly catalogued.

10 It was claimed that Fenn’s *Mother’s grammar* reached twenty-two editions by 1849 and *Child’s grammar* reached fifty editions by the 1860s. Stoker, ‘Ellenor Fenn’, p. 848. Moon 267, 259. Barbauld’s *Lessons* (1778-9) and Sarah Trimmer’s *Easy lessons for young children* (1790) remained in print well into the nineteenth century, but neither graded reader appears to have been produced in as many different formats as *Cobwebs*.

11 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 5.

12 Darton, p.164. Darton offers no evidence, but in an editor’s note Alderson judges that this figure is ‘probably fairly accurate’, based on manuscript records of the Darton firm (p. 357).

the end of the century Fenn was devising alternative reading schemes for her new publishers.¹³

Marshall revamped *Cobwebs* in 1805 (see below) and in 1815 Marshall assigned the title to Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, who brought out the first of at least four editions between 1815 and 1825, some in a conger with Marshall.¹⁴ A two-volume edition dated 1820 by the British Library, which lists Marshall as the sole publisher, suggests he did not relinquish the copyright.¹⁵ In 1822 Baldwin, Cradock and Joy issued *Cobwebs* as a two-volumes-in-one edition (single volumes remained available for a while, perhaps to clear old stock), and operating as Baldwin and Cradock they published at least four more combined editions between 1833 and 1841.¹⁶ Cradock and Co., a later incarnation of the firm, was still advertising *Cobwebs* as one of their 'Popular school books' in 1849, indicating that the domestic title was appropriated as a school reader.¹⁷

Following the Copyright Act of 1842, five more leading publishers recognised the sales potential of Fenn's reading book.¹⁸ In the 1840s and 1850s The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) published three editions and Darton &

13 *Art of teaching in sport* was last issued in 1796. Fenn rubbished her earlier teaching guide in the accompanying booklet to a new teaching 'Box': 'the Contriver [i.e. Fenn] had frequently the mortification to perceive, that the book, which accompanied her box, had not sufficiently initiated the purchaser in the Art to Teaching in Sport'. See [Ellenor Fenn], *The teacher's assistant in the art of teaching grammar in sport* (Printed for J. Harris, 1809), pp. 6-7. The booklet probably accompanied *Sportive exercises in grammar. By Mrs Lovechild* (J. Harris, [1809?]), advertised as 'Mrs Lovechild's Box of Grammatical Amusement'. See Moon 1023. Fenn also produced a new *Spelling book* published by Harris (1805) and Darton and Harvey (1807), linked to *Child's grammar* and *Mother's grammar*. See Moon 273; Lawrence Darton, *The Dartons*, p. 98, G334.

14 Marshall published other Fenn titles with Baldwin, Cradock and Joy. See classified ads in *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 17 July 1823, p. [1].

15 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years...* (Printed and sold by J. Marshall, [1820?]), two volumes, BL 12835.aa.45. The edition is very like that of [1805?], but it has a new frontispiece. Stoker suggests Marshall did not relinquish copyright; see *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 5.

16 Classified advertisements indicate further editions from Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, or their successors: as part of 'A Mothers Library', two vols with boards at 3s. in *The Morning Chronicle*, 23 January 1819. 'A New Edition, embellished, price 3s. bound' in *The Examiner*, 23 April 1842; *The Standard*, 21 January 1842, 6 December 1843, and 29 January 1845.

17 The Cradock and Co. edition is advertised by the firm under 'Popular School Books' in *The Athenæum*, 20 January 1849, p. 60. It is advertised with 'cuts by Harvey' (William Harvey 1790-1866), demonstrating how Cole's practice of promoting of artists was adopted by other publishers.

18 The new law, which extended copyright to the author's lifetime plus seven years (or forty-two years from publication, whichever was longer), made publishing new authors less attractive. This may explain the sudden interest in *Cobwebs*, which was out of copyright. St. Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, pp. 120-1.

Co. issued four.¹⁹ Lockwood & Co published three editions between 1861 and 1871, and a further edition trading as Crosby Lockwood & Co. in 1885.²⁰ George Routledge and Sons issued two editions in the 1870s, and Frederick Warne and Co. four editions between 1870 and 1894.²¹

Pirated editions and imitations

Cobwebs also appeared in several pirated editions; for example, a Dublin printer, John Rice, issued it with new woodcuts in 1794.²² It was also transported to America: two editions were advertised by Johnson and Warner in 1807 and 1814, although no copies have been found; further American editions published in Philadelphia, Baltimore, New York, and Boston appeared between 1819 and 1851.²³ Miller Hutchens in Rhode Island even changed the name of its 1819 edition to *The Columbian spelling book*, to make *Cobwebs* appear American.²⁴ An unrelated school primer, printed in Edinburgh in 1826, lifted some of the dialogues from the second volume of *Cobwebs*, incorporating them (without attribution) as reading practice, demonstrating that Fenn's teaching material had migrated out of the nursery and into the classroom.²⁵ The unillustrated French edition, *Toiles d'araignées pour attraper les mouches* (1799), issued by Fenn's new publisher Elizabeth Newbery (see Chapter Two), successfully circumvented Marshall's copyright restrictions in translation.²⁶

The Religious Tract Society's Sunday School book *New cobwebs to catch little flies*, first issued in 1833 in bright marbled boards, and republished several times over the next fifteen years, was an obvious rip-off, but bears no relation to Fenn's *Cobwebs*, other than its adoption of a similar dialogue format and the prominence given to

19 SPCK: [1844], [c. 1849], [1852?]; Darton: 1842, [1845-1847?], 1852, 1858.

20 Lockwood & Co.: [c. 1861], [c. 1866], [c. 1871]; Crosby Lockwood & Co.: [1885].

21 Routledge (London and NY): [1871], [1879]; Warne: [c. 1870] in association with Scribner, Welford and Co. in NY, [ca. 1870], [ca. 1870], [1876], [1894?].

22 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 5.

23 Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson (1807-1814), Johnson & Warner (1813-1814), Robert Desilver (1825). Baltimore: E. J. Coale (1825); NY: Mahlon Day (three editions 1832, 1834, 1837), C. S. Francis & Co., and Boston: J. S. Francis & Co. (1851). See, Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, pp. 16-18, nos. 15, 16, 21-25, and 37.

24 [Ellenor Fenn], *The Columbian spelling book* (Providence, RI: Muller & Hutchens, 1819). I am grateful to Charlotte Mitchell for locating this edition.

25 See 'The bees', 'The flies', 'The spider', 'The bird', 'The happy family', 'The fair', 'The pictures', and 'The hedgehog' in George Fulton, *A Pronouncing vocabulary with lessons in prose and verse* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1826), pp. 72-86.

26 [Ellenor Fenn], *Toiles d'araignées pour attraper les mouches* (Elizabeth Newbery, 1899). Moon 276.

the mother as educator. Nevertheless, the book clearly points to the Evangelical revival that Henry Cole railed against in the Home Treasury.²⁷ The RTS ‘Mamma’ is far less sympathetic than Fenn’s counterpart, suggesting to her children: ‘It is a sin when we do not try to read as well as we can’.²⁸ This pirating and mimicking of *Cobwebs* shows its wide-ranging influence outside the legitimate publishing arena.

Cover design 1780s and 1790s: John Marshall

Editions of *Cobwebs* published by Marshall up to the end of the century were issued in a standard trade binding of vellum backed marbled boards, described by Alderson and Oyens as “‘in the vellum manner’”.²⁹ Each copy I have examined differs slightly in size, indicating that Marshall printed according to his need for copies and that paper stock varied.³⁰ Stoker suggests that *Cobwebs* was published in separate volumes until 1822, when Baldwin and Cradock issued their two-in-one volume.³¹ However, the V&A’s alleged 1783 copy, which is clearly not a first edition, appears to be an example of an early combined volume with newly set type and printers’ ornaments.³² First editions of *Cobwebs* are identifiable by a printer’s errata note inserted into page four of Volume II, which the V&A’s alleged first edition does not have.³³ An advertisement for the *Set of toys* also indicates the edition was published after 1785, when the game was launched. The edition has just 72 pages in Volume I, instead of the original 94, owing to a significant reduction in type-size of the prefatory material aimed at adults, and a slight reduction in type size for the dialogue text; the reduced pagination corresponds to editions published

27 See Samuel Green, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years* (RTS, 1899), p. 47. The RTS 1849 catalogue lists over 300 children’s books, and annual circulation averaged about four million copies (p. 49).

28 *New cobwebs to catch little flies* (Religious Tract Society, 1833), p. 16.

29 Alderson & Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 273. They note that S. Roscoe, in *John Newbery and his Successors*, suggests the method was introduced in the 1760s due to the scarcity of leather. Children’s books were much more commonly published in bound form, which was the exception in the book trade. *Ibid.*, p. 267. Gaskell also notes that edition binding of children’s books in a standard cover of quarter vellum and paper boards was the exception and that most other types of books continued to be bound by booksellers (not printers or publishers) well into the nineteenth century. See Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, p. 153.

30 See Appendix Two for variations in size and pagination. Stoker lists nine editions up to 1800. See *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, pp. 15-16, and pp. 9-11.

31 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 17, no. 19.

32 The copy of *Cobwebs* in question is V&A NAL pressmark 60.Z.189 (e), catalogued as [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies, or, Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. In two volumes...* (Printed and sold by John Marshall, [1783]), volumes I and II combined. Neither the ESTC nor Stoker records the edition.

33 Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 4 (13 n.).

after 1787.³⁴

The marbled boards are marginally smaller than some examples (15 x 9.5 cm, rather than 16.5 x 10 cm), and the paper is of a slightly inferior quality, which indicates that Marshall was not only printing editions in quick succession, but experimenting with different formats, possibly to cut production costs or accommodate changes in available paper stock (Fig. 6.1).³⁵ The woodcuts are framed with a ‘ram’ swag, instead of the earlier ‘urn’ design. The imprint is ‘John Marshall’, indicating an edition after 1789 when the ‘& Co’ was dropped, and has the address at No. 4 Aldermay Church Yard as Watling Street, rather than Bow Lane as in the 1783 edition.³⁶

There are other indications that this was not a first printing, which suggest that Marshall did not have a close interest in quality control. For example, the page reference ‘58’ for the frontispiece illustration for ‘The doll’ does not correspond to the page number for the story in this edition (p. 44), and the frontispiece etchings and woodblock illustrations are poor reproductions, indicating wear to plates and blocks (Fig. 6.2). It is unlikely, therefore, to represent a custom-bound edition, as a discerning customer would not have found the poor quality of the copy acceptable.³⁷ Close examination of the V&A’s ‘[1783]’ *Cobwebs* thus offers overwhelming evidence that it is not, in fact, a first edition, but a much later printing, probably from around 1799.³⁸ Nevertheless, the edition is bibliographically significant; it reveals Marshall’s haphazard publishing arrangements, and clearly demonstrates the problems associated with dating early editions.

34 It has the same number of pages and advertisement for *A set of toys* as an edition dated [c. 1787-9], but the imprint differs. Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 15, no. 3. It has the same address and printers’ imprint (required by law from 1799) at the end of volume II that Stoker notes for a two-volume edition [c. 1800]. *Ibid.*, p. 16, no. 9.

35 Fully bound volumes cost 1s. 4d. in 1790; half-bound volumes remained at one shilling. See classified advertisements in *World* (1787) for 4 January and 30 December 1790.

36 The firm retained a second address at 17 Queen Street, Cheapside between 1787 and 1798, according to Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 15 (27 n), and this does not appear on the imprint.

37 Marshall advertises that Mrs Teachwell’s books ‘may be had in various Bindings: or uniformly bound in Sets’. *Cobwebs*, I, [p. 94].

38 It remains impossible accurately to pinpoint the date of publication. For more effective comparison, I have listed an estimated date of [1799?] in Appendix Two, retaining the NAL suggested date in brackets.



Fig. 6.1 John Marshall editions (l-r): *Cobwebs* [ca. 1790; 1794?], I, cover (16.5 x 10 cm), NAL 60.X.189 (c); *Cobwebs* [ca. 1795], I, cover (16.5 x 9.5 cm), NAL 60.Z.189 (d); *Cobwebs* [1783; 1899?], I, cover (15 x 9.5 cm), NAL 60.X.189 (e). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

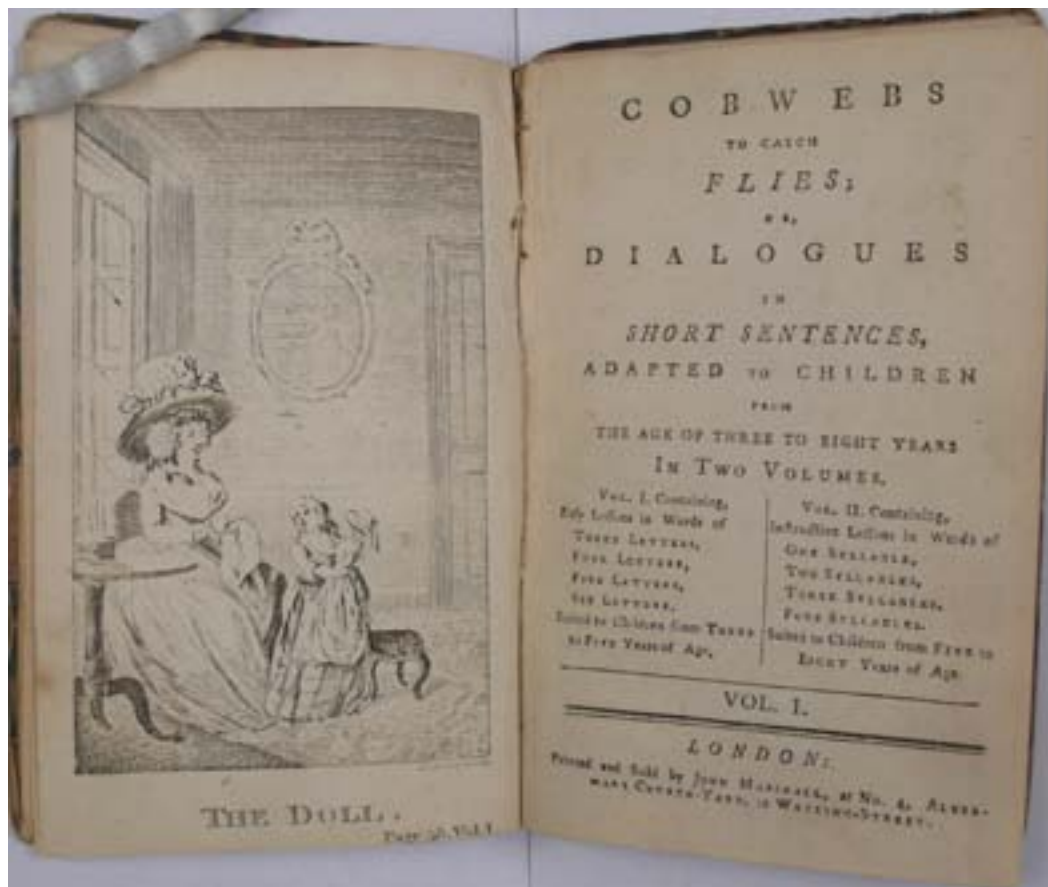


Fig. 6.2 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1783; 1799?]), I, frontispiece and title page. NAL 60.Z.189 (e). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Cover design 1800s and 1810s: John Marshall and Baldwin, Cradock & Joy

Cobwebs received its first change of format around the turn of the century, just as John Harris was issuing the first of his exciting new-style publications. Marshall issued a new edition in 1805 with a more modern, but less substantial, binding of rose-pink boards (Fig. 6.3).³⁹ The introduction of an engraved title panel pasted on the cover indicates an emerging awareness of the marketing potential of cover design within the children's book trade. Marshall may have been attempting to create a recognisable 'nursery' book by making the volumes slim enough for a small child to hold, and issuing them in a fashionable pastel cover, or he may simply have been trying to trim production costs; the edition is printed in duodecimo format, with saddle-stitched sections pasted on to gauze at the spine, which would have reduced the binding costs. However, it seems likely that competition prompted the restyling. The 'Mrs Lovechild' series of Fenn's books, now published by Harris, were issued in a similar style, which suggests Marshall copied the design.⁴⁰

A similar format is retained for the [1815] edition, printed by assignment from John Marshall for Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, and John Sharpe's Juvenile Library (Fig. 6.4).⁴¹ The editions differ only slightly: the 1805 edition has a slightly darker pink paper wrapper, with an elaborately decorated oval shaped, engraved pictorial title label pasted on the boards (16 x 10 cm), while the 1815 edition is marginally smaller (15 x 9.5 cm), with a rectangular engraved title panel pasted to the front cover.⁴² The John Marshall 1820 edition is identical to the 1805 edition in respect of cover design and typesetting, however, it has the redrawn frontispiece introduced by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy

39 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. In two volumes...* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co, [1805?]). V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1805. The new 'pink' edition may have been issued even earlier. See Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 10.

40 'Mrs Lovechild' books came in many colours, but Roscoe's description of Fenn's *The friend of mothers* (1799) suggests Marshall emulated the design: 'Stiff salmon-pink wrappers, oval label on upper'. See S. Roscoe, *John Newbery and his Successors: 1740-1814: A Bibliography* (Wormley: Five Owls Press, 1973), pp. 108-9, J116.

41 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. In two volumes...* (Printed for Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, and John Sharpe, Juvenile Library. By assignment from John Marshall, 1815), I and II. V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1815 (REN).

42 Pictorial labels were a common feature of books of this period. See Alderson & Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 274.



Fig. 6.3 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1805?]), I, cover (16 x 10 cm). NAL AA.FENE.CO.1805 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.4 *Cobwebs* (Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1815), I cover (15.5 x 9.5 cm). NAL AA.FENE.CO.1815 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.5 *Cobwebs* (Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1817), II, cover (13 x 9 cm). NAL 60.S.44. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

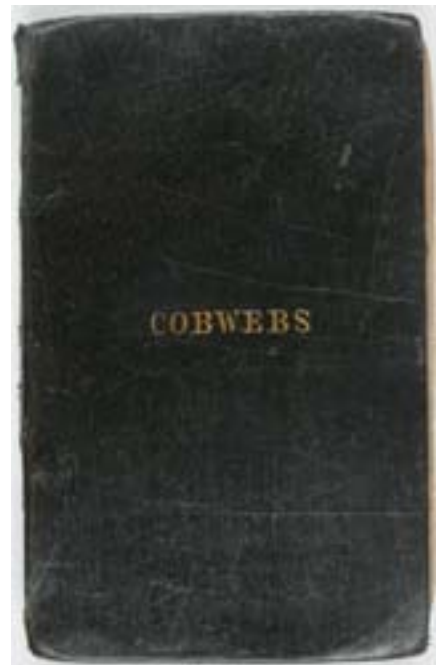


Fig. 6.6 *Cobwebs* (Baldwin and Cradock, 1837), cover (14 x 9 cm). NAL AA.FENE.CO.1837 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

in 1815.⁴³ Surprisingly, the 1817 edition of *Cobwebs*, published by Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, N. Hailes, and John Marshall, reverts to the format of the original trade bindings; it has lively coloured marbled boards, quarter bound in red morocco (13 x 9 cm), perhaps to remind parents of the original book of their childhood (Fig. 6.5).⁴⁴

Cover design 1820s to 1840s: Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, Baldwin and Cradock

Cobwebs was given another design overhaul in the 1820s when Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy introduced a more sombre cover design, along with a new set of woodcut illustrations.⁴⁵ The restyling was used as a selling point; *Cobwebs* was advertised as a ‘Christmas present or New Year gift’ with ‘entirely new Embellishments’ in two volumes with boards, or as two volumes in one, ‘handsomely bound’, at three shillings.⁴⁶ An example of a combined edition from 1822, printed in association with N. Hailes, and John Marshall by T. C. Hansard, has a dark red roan cover with lettering stamped in gold (14 x 9 cm).⁴⁷ The 1825 edition was issued in two shades of green, or black roan.⁴⁸ Baldwin & Cradock (a later incarnation of the firm) retained the same economical trade binding, typical of schoolbooks, for the reissues in 1833 and 1837, which was also issued in dark red, and

43 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. In two volumes...* (Printed and sold by John Marshall and Co, [1820?]), I and II. BL12835.aa.45.

44 [Ellenor, Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. In two volumes...* (Printed for Baldwin, Cradock & Joy; N. Hailes; and John Marshall, 1817), II, V&A NAL 60.S.44.

45 The new edition with ‘entirely new embellishments’ was advertised in two volumes with boards, or ‘handsomely bound in one volume’, priced at three shillings. *Berrows Worcester Journal*, 10 July 1823.

46 *Literary Chronicle*, 3 January 1824, p. 15. Other advertisements position *Cobwebs* as a ‘Select’, or ‘Superior’ children’s book. See *Berrow’s Worcester Journal*, 10 July 1823, *Liverpool Mercury*, 9 July 1824, *Jackson’s Oxford Journal*, 24 July 1824.

47 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years*. (Printed for Baldwin, Cradock & Joy; N. Hailes; and John Marshall, 1822). This two-volumes-in-one example is from my collection and has a dark red roan binding.

48 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. A new edition* (Printed for Baldwin, Cradock & Joy; N. Hailes; and John Marshall, 1825). Two volumes in one. Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 10, notes the 1825 edition in black, and comments on the poor quality of the roan (sheepskin tanned with sumac to imitate morocco). I have examined V&A NAL 60.O.41 (dark green), and an example from my collection in light green. The different colour bindings probably represent separate batches of the same edition. For this practice, see Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, p. 247.

blue (Fig. 6.6).⁴⁹ Producing the combined edition in a hardwearing standard binding suitable for school use obviously made economic sense, enabling the publishers to peg the price at three shillings through to the late 1840s.⁵⁰

The tooled gilt lettering for the cover title and gold line detail on the spine of these editions were clearly designed to add visual impact and make the binding look more sumptuous for the home nursery, and in one example from 1837 the title appears in a gilt frame.⁵¹ The reduction of the title to '*Cobwebs*' suggests the book was so well known that it would be recognised as Fenn's easy reader.

Cover design 1840s to 1860s: SPCK and Darton & Co.

The editions published by the SPCK, which were specially produced for use as Christian readers in elementary schools (see below), demonstrate further advances in mass production of books for children, which enabled a reduction of costs along with certain improvements in quality. The diagonal weave grain cloth wrappers (14 x 9.5 cm) appear to have been attached before the addition of the cover decoration, which is blocked in blind, indicating the use of mechanized production.⁵² However, the use of smooth machined paper and high-quality wood-block illustrations demonstrates that cheaper mechanised production did not necessarily result in a book of inferior quality or design. The discreet decoration stamped on the SPCK brown [1844?] and dull green [1852?] limp cloth covers (it was also issued in red and dark blue) is suggestive of a prayer or hymnbook and was probably designed to

49 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. A new edition* (Printed for Baldwin and Cradock, 1833). I have examined two examples from my own collection (dark green and dark red). [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. A new edition* (Printed for Baldwin and Cradock, 1837). Two volumes in one. Three copies from this date have been examined: V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1837 (dark green); V&A NAL 60.F.2. (dark red), and V&A NAL 60.S.45 (rebound in cloth). Stoker notes 1830s bindings in dark blue. 'Cobwebs to Catch Flies', p. 10. For schoolbook bindings see Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography*, pp. 247-8.

50 See classified advertisements in *Trewman's Exeter Flying Post or Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser*, 8 July 1824, and *The Examiner* 23 April 1842, *The Standard* (London), 25 July 1848, which list *Cobwebs* at 3s. for a combined volume.

51 See V&A NAL 60.F.2.

52 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children. A new edition* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1860?]), BL 12836.a.15. This copy has an endpaper inscription dated 1845, suggesting that it is more likely to be an example of the [c. 1844] edition noted by Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 16, no. 35. I list it with the earlier date in Appendix Two. Also examined: [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1852?]), V&A NAL 60.B.45. A similar edition with green covers.

be hard-wearing and not show the dirt (Fig. 6.7).⁵³

The 1858 edition published by the Quaker firm Darton & Co., which was similarly intended to promote Christian values, has a red limp cloth cover adorned with elegantly scripted gold title, signalling a more exciting publication designed for the gift market (Fig. 6.8).⁵⁴ The cover (16 x 10.5 cm) is well designed, with a diamond-shaped title panel surrounded with arabesques blocked in blind. Its similarity in style to the limp red cloth covers of the Home Treasury series strongly suggests that Darton & Co. had been influenced by Cole's design.

Cover design 1870s: Frederick Warne and Co., and George Routledge and Sons

At the time that Crane's colourful toy books were taking the market by storm *Cobwebs* was being positioned as a 'classic' title. The 1870 'Crofton Cousins' edition, published by Frederick Warne and Co, has red cloth boards (15 x 9.5 cm), with the series details stamped in black above a coloured printed pictorial label displaying the *Cobwebs* title (Fig. 6.9).⁵⁵ The illustration features a mother dressed in Victorian bustle and bonnet walking with her son, who is also smartly clothed in suit and boater. The picture is reminiscent of the frontispiece illustration for the second volume of Marshall's late 1780s edition, thus referencing the earlier *Cobwebs*, but updating it. The other undated edition (from around 1870), attributed to Warne and Co., is more simply bound in a green cloth cover blocked in blind (15 x 9.5 cm); the title is stamped in gold within a gold circle decorated with leaves and flowers (Fig. 6.10).⁵⁶ The firm may have been experimenting with alternative

53 The red and blue covers are noted by Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 11.

54 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children. A new edition* (Darton & Co, 1858). V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1858. Stoker comments on the design, but gives no details of the 1840s and early 1850s covers. *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 9. Two other editions in limp red cloth published in 1852, and [c. 1850-57] are listed in Lawrence Darton, *The Dartons*, pp. 427-8, H581-583.

55 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. A new illustrated edition* (Frederick Warne and Co.; NY: Scribner, Welford & Co., [ca. 1870]), TPL OC: BI LOV 1870. Stoker notes the 'coloured lithographic printed label' in *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 11.

56 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight. A new illustrated edition* (London: Frederick Warne and Co.; NY: Scribner, Welford & Co., [ca. 1870]), TPL OC: BI LOV 1870. The title page is missing, but Stoker suggests the example is possibly from the same stereotype plates as [ca. 1870] in same collection. See Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 19, no. 41.

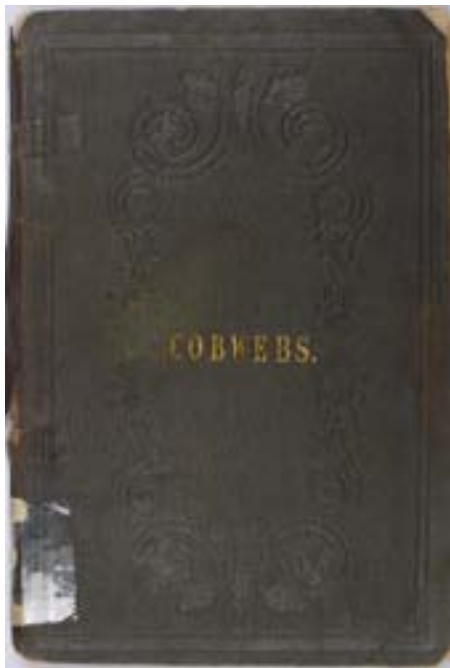


Fig. 6.7 *Cobwebs* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1852?]), cover (14 x 9.5 cm). NAL 60.B.45. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

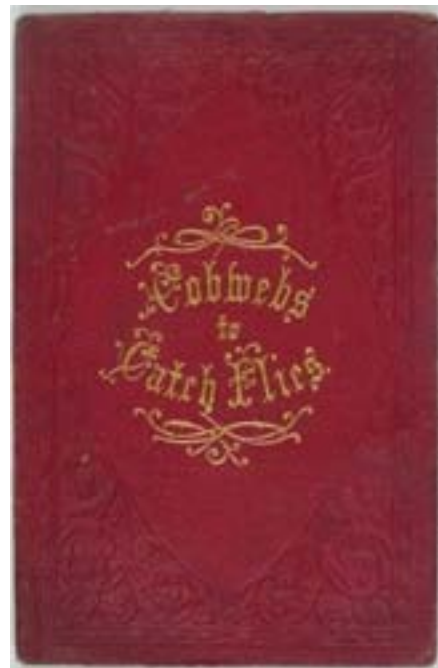


Fig. 6.8 *Cobwebs* (Darton & Co., 1858), cover (16 x 10.5 cm). NAL AA.FENE.CO.1858 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

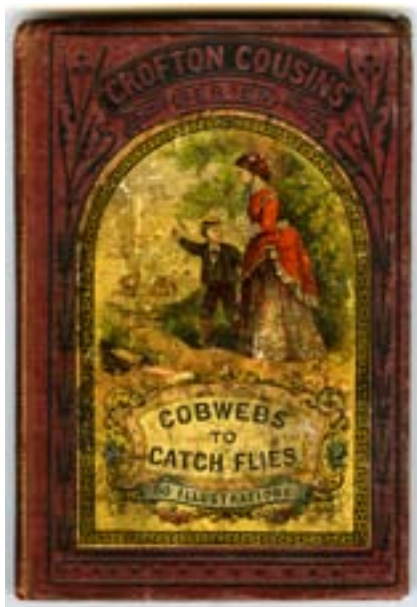


Fig. 6.9 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne; NY: Scribner, Welford, and Co., [ca. 1870]), cover (15 x 9.5 cm). BI LOV 1870. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto, Canada.

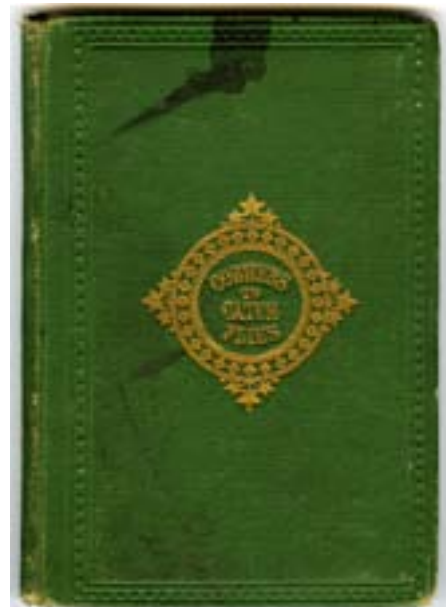


Fig. 6.10 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne; NY: Scribner, Welford, and Co., [ca. 1870]), cover (15 x 9.5 cm). BI LOV 1870. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto, Canada.

styles to attract different sections of the market, and the latter book may represent an edition advertised in ‘Warne’s Ninepenny Juvenile Books’.⁵⁷

The Routledge edition of 1871, which would have appeared alongside the Warne edition in bookshops, is similarly bound in green cloth over boards (15.5 x 10 cm), with a decorative border blocked in black; it has gilt fillets on the spine, but does not feature a title panel (Fig. 6.11).⁵⁸ Interestingly, it is quite different in design from the books that Crane produced for Routledge, demonstrating the diversity of the firm’s output, which included a range of well-illustrated educational titles, such as *Routledge’s British spelling book* (1865), and Mavor’s *English spelling book* (1885) illustrated by Kate Greenaway. The edition has high-quality illustrations by various artists, some engraved by the Dalziel Brothers. Routledge marketed *Cobwebs* in the ‘Bread and Honey Library’, priced at sixpence, and later advertised the book as one of the firm’s ‘Ninepenny Juveniles with Coloured plates’, demonstrating the continuing importance of series links.⁵⁹ The 1879 reissue is printed on better quality paper, and the binding is enlivened with colour lithographed line drawings of a boy fishing and a girl skipping, clearly indicating the book’s suitability for both sexes, a factor that remained important in twentieth-century school readers such as James Nisbet’s Janet and John series of the late 1940s (Fig. 6.12).⁶⁰ The picture of the children at play, showing an excited dog running beside the girl, suggests the idea that reading is fun. Intense competition made cover design an important sales device; the novel colour cover would have been very appealing to children.

Cover design 1880s: Crosby Lockwood and Co.

The cover of the 1885 Crosby Lockwood and Co. edition similarly demonstrates the importance of decorative covers for attracting attention in the bookshop. The

57 A classified advertisement in *The Leeds Mercury*, 16 December 1868 lists *Cobwebs* and *The Crofton Cousins* in its ‘Ninepenny Juvenile Books’ series.

58 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. A new illustrated edition* (London and NY: George Routledge & Sons, [1871]). BL 12803.aaa.30.

59 Routledge ‘Bread and Honey Library’ advertised in *Every Boy’s Annual*, [1880], p. 4. ‘Ninepenny Juveniles’ in ‘Routledge Catalogue’ appended to Lucy D. Sale Barker, *Lily’s screen* (London and NY: George Routledge and Sons, 1877), p.25.

60 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years. A new illustrated edition* (London and NY: George Routledge and Sons, [1879]). BL 12800.aaa.59.



Fig. 6.11 *Cobwebs* (George Routledge and Sons, [1871]), cover (15.5 x 10 cm).
© British Library Board 12803.aaa.30.



Fig. 6.12 *Cobwebs* (George Routledge and Sons, [1879]), cover (15.5 x 10 cm).
© British Library Board 12809.aaa.59.



Fig. 6.13 *Cobwebs* (Crosby, Lockwood and Co., [1885]), cover (16.5 x 10.5 cm).
© British Library Board 12809.aaa.67.



Fig. 6.14 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne, [1894?]), cover (16 x 11 cm). BI LOV 1894.
Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto, Canada.

green cloth boards are printed with the title, '*Cobwebs to Catch Flies*', along with an explanation of the contents as 'Dialogues in Short Sentences for Children', to give a clear indication of the book's contents.⁶¹ This edition has a case binding (16.5 x 10.5 cm) with decorative endpapers, demonstrating the publisher's keeping pace with the current trends in book design. The use of gold leaf on the lettering focuses the eye on the title, which is positioned between two decorative panels blind blocked in black. The accompanying illustration, also picked out in gold, adds impact to the cover, with a delicate cobweb running under the word 'Cobwebs' and a crowd of flies weaving their way through the letters to the right of the title (Fig. 6.13). This shows the publisher not only emphasising the title as a selling point, but making typography and decorative illustration a key feature of the cover design.

Cover design 1890s: Frederick Warne and Co.

Frederick Warne and Co's 1894 edition has pale blue-green cloth boards (16 x 11 cm), featuring an elegant illustration of leaves and berries, stamped in black, green, and orange, within a black decorative border (Fig. 6.14).⁶² The title panel and spine are blocked in gold, with the title lettering '*Cobwebs to Catch Flies*' shown in relief. The decorative composition clearly would have made it appealing as a gift book.

The range of bindings produced for the different editions of *Cobwebs* shows how publishers used cover design to market children's books. Different bindings emphasised its educational purpose, or its entertainment value. Developments in printing and binding technology – for example, tooling, colour printing, and endpapers – permitted the production of covers which were both cheaper and more elaborate. Although there were some fluctuations in price as the book variously appeared in marble boards, paper cover boards, roan, limp cloth and cloth-covered boards, a copy of *Cobwebs* in 1885 priced at 1s.

61 Ellenor Fenn, *Cobwebs to catch flies: or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted for children from the age of three to eight years. A new edition* (Crosby Lockwood and Co., [1885]), BL 12809.aaa.67. Two earlier editions published by Lockwood & Co [c. 1866], and [c. 1871] are listed by Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 18. An even earlier 'new edition' by Lockwood & Co. is advertised for 'Nursery or Maternal Tuition' in *The Athenaeum*, 23 February 1861, p. 271, priced at 2s. cloth, or in two parts at 1s. each; the firm also advertised the edition as a schoolbook in *The Athenaeum*, 8 February 1862, p. 180, with a two-part version in limp cloth.

62 [Ellenor Fenn], *Cobwebs to catch flies; or Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight* (London: Frederick Warne and Co.; NY: Scribner Welford and Co., [1894?]). TPL OC: BI LOV 1894.

for a combined issue was half the price of the first edition volumes of 1783, which cost 2s. for the set.⁶³ Some editions issued by Routledge and Warne cost as little as 9d. (see Appendix Two). Both inside and outside the book, changes reflected developing fashion. In fact, almost all the innovations outlined in earlier chapters can be traced through the different incarnations of *Cobwebs*.

Title pages, frontispieces and tailpieces

As shown in Chapter Two, the original frontispiece engravings emphasised the role of the mother as invigilator of her child's education, showing a fashionably dressed mother supervising educational play in the home in Volume I, and directing natural history study in the countryside in Volume II. Severe wear to the copperplates (as shown in Fig. 6.15) required them to be redrawn for the 1815 edition. However, as the fashions were only minimally changed in the new drawings they quickly became out-dated and Baldwin and Cradock dropped them when they restyled the book. Their 1825 edition features an attractive title-page illustration of a mother, with a naked baby seated fairy-like next to a giant spider's web, thus linking it to the title, which was used in editions up to 1837 (Fig. 6.16). The copperplate engraving had given way to Bewick-style wood engraving.⁶⁴

In Victorian editions the frontispiece is used to emphasise the importance of the child, rather than the educational value of the book. Darton and Co. pick up on the current fashion for a more romantic view of the child in the title page and frontispiece to *Cobwebs* (1858) (Fig. 6.17). The title-page vignette shows a bonneted mother and her three small children feeding swans as they are punted along a river. While picking up on the nature theme in the original eighteenth-century frontispiece for volume two, in which a mother shows her son a bird in a tree, the Victorian scene is more informal in its depiction of the family having fun, rather than engaged in instruction. The frontispiece, drawn by George Measom (1818-1901), which is completely different in style from the reprinted 1822 woodcuts used to illustrate

⁶³ The Crosby Lockwood cloth edition at one shilling is advertised in *The Standard* (London), 21 July 1885. See Appendix Two for comparative prices.

⁶⁴ 'End grain' wood engraving, popularized by Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), was used for the new title page illustration. For the Bewick style and the influence of his workshop, see Nigel Tattersfield, *Thomas Bewick: The Complete Illustrative Work*, 3 vols (London: the BL and The Bibliographical Society; Newcastle DE: Oak Knoll Press, 2011), I.

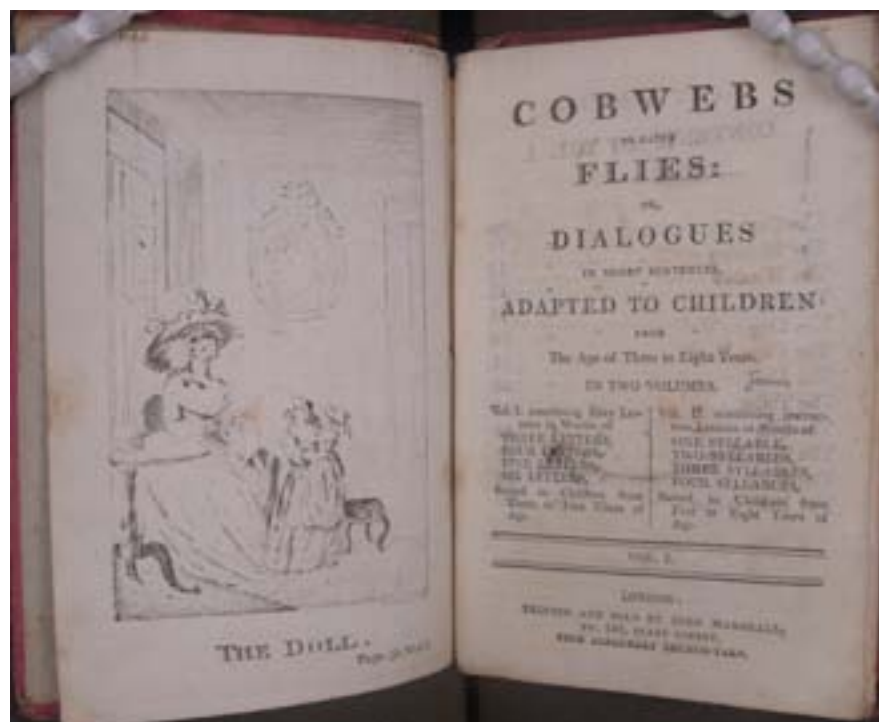


Fig. 6.15 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [1805?]), I, frontispiece and title page. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1805 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

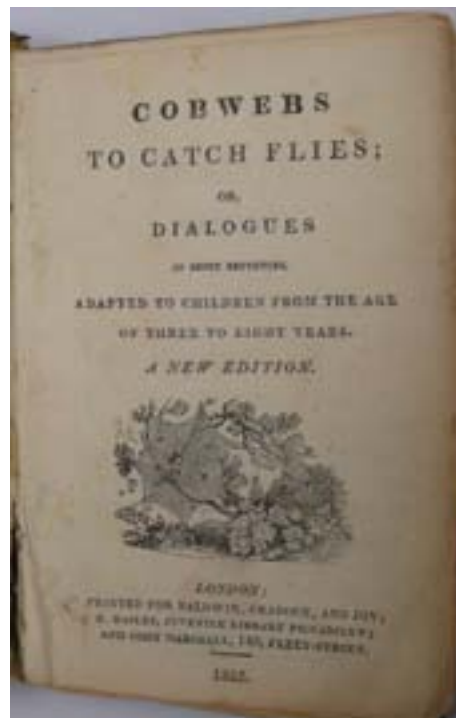


Fig. 6.16 *Cobwebs* (Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1825), I, title page. NAL 60.O.41. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.17 *Cobwebs* (Darton & Co., 1858), frontispiece by George Measom and title page. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1858 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

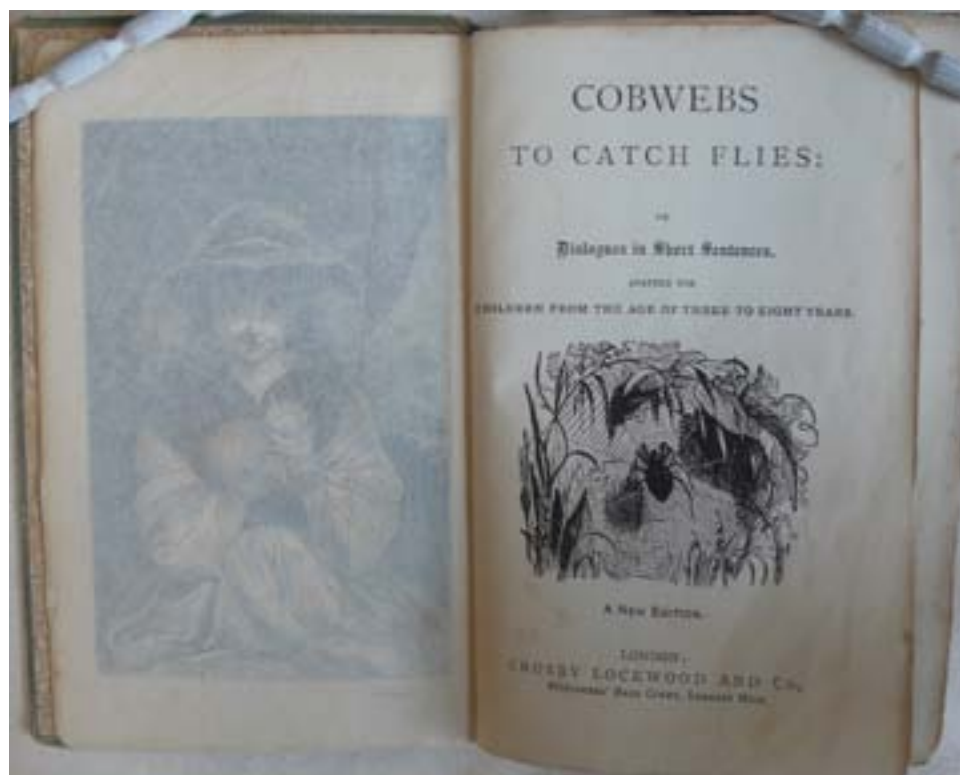


Fig. 6.18 *Cobwebs* (Crosby, Lockwood and Co., [1885]), frontispiece by George Measom (under tissue guard) and title page. Copy from my own collection.

the rest of the text, showing the child posed in the manner of a Joshua Reynolds painting, holding a kitten in her cupped hands as she peers out demurely from under her flowered bonnet.⁶⁵ Crosby Lockwood used the same illustration in 1885, adding an attractive title page illustration of a spider's web (Fig. 6.18).

Warne used a stock illustration for their editions, which bears no relation to Fenn's stories; it shows a small boy being given water from a jug at a well (Fig. 6.19). By contrast, the frontispiece used in the Routledge edition demonstrates the illustrator trying to position the old-fashioned book in a contemporary context. It features a colour lithograph showing a grandmother reading stories to children at her knee, thus alluding to the fact that *Cobwebs* was a book enjoyed by previous generations, but, nevertheless, suggesting its relevance to Victorian readers in the eagerness with which the grandchildren await the story (Fig. 6.20).⁶⁶

It is also interesting to note the different ways in which publishers used printers' ornaments and tailpieces to create interest. Marshall made a feature of the well-executed cartouches in the first edition, framing them with decorative floral headpieces featuring classical motifs. The printer's ornaments were altered with successive printings and dropped when the book was redesigned at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Both Darton & Co. and Crosby, Lockwood employed decorative frames to make the 1820s illustrations that they were reusing appear more fashionable in the Victorian period. Most of the decorative tailpieces introduced in the 1805 edition, illustrating flowers, leaves or insects, have been attributed to the wood-engraver John Bewick by Tattersfield; Marshall had bought the blocks used to illustrate John Riley's *Beauties of the Creation* (1790), a much praised natural history volume, and was now recycling them to decorate the spaces at the end of the stories in *Cobwebs* (Fig. 6.21).⁶⁷

Tailpieces remained a feature until the middle of the century, but while reflecting

65 See for example, 'Penelope Boothby' (1788), by Reynolds.

66 The illustration shows a slim pink volume of *Cobwebs* from the early nineteenth century.

67 See Nigel Tattersfield, *John Bewick: Engraver on Wood 1760-1795* (BL and Oak Knoll Press, 2001), pp. 76-80, JB4-5. The Bewick blocks were purchased in 1800. Alderson and Oyens, *Be Merry and Wise*, p. 65, no. 87. John Bewick was the younger brother of Thomas Bewick. See Iain Bain, 'Bewick, John (*bap.* 1760, *d.* 1795)', *ODNB*.

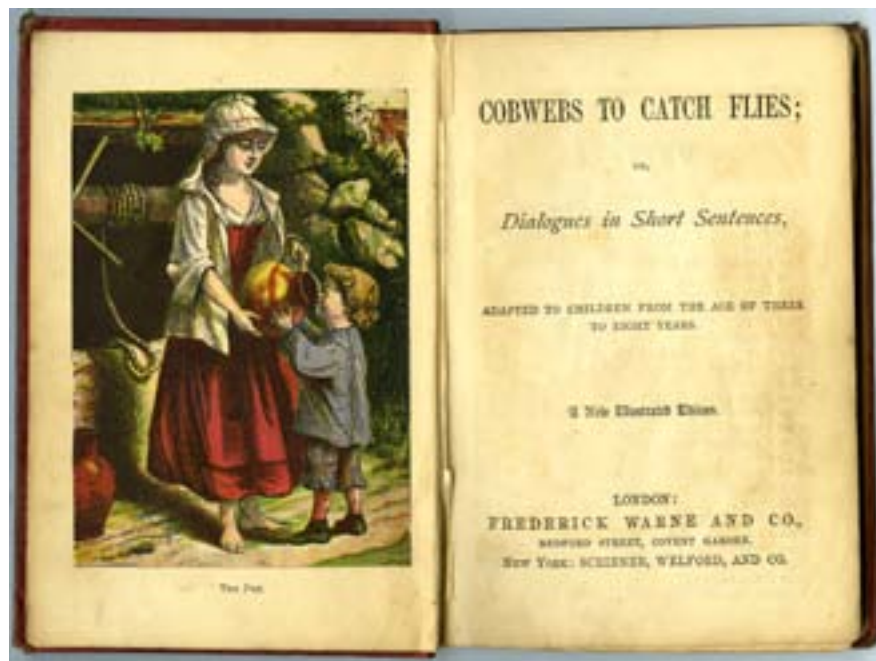


Fig. 6.19 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne; NY: Scribner, Welford, and Co., [ca. 1870]), frontispiece and title page. BI LOV 1870. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto, Canada.

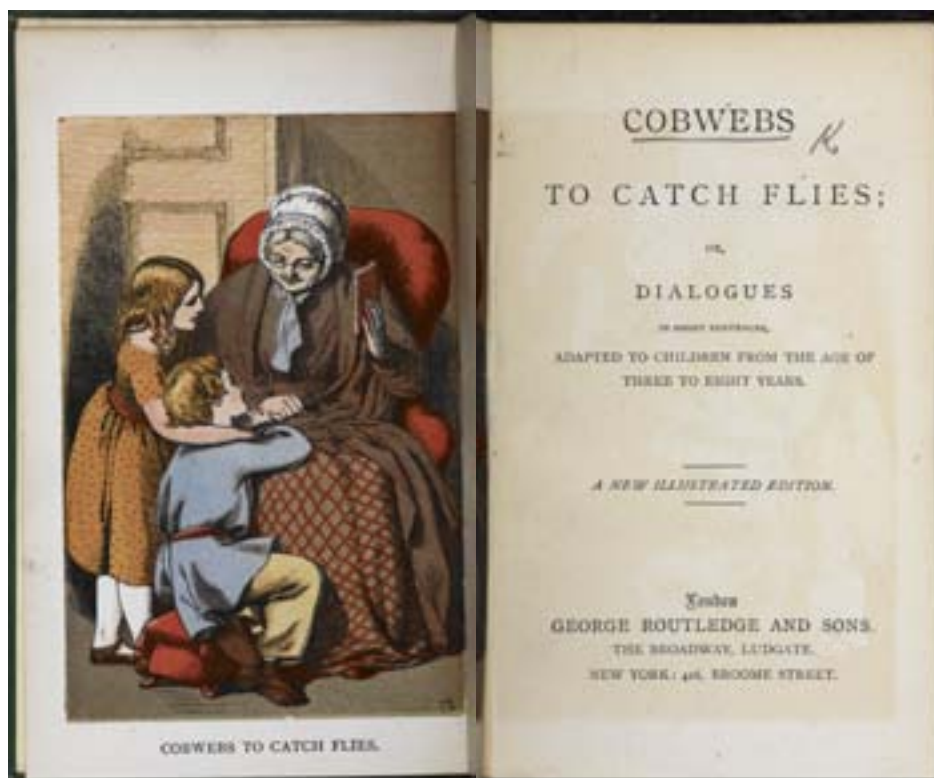


Fig. 6.20 *Cobwebs* (George Routledge and Sons, [1871]), frontispiece and title page. © British Library Board 12803.aaa.30.



Fig. 6.21 *Cobwebs*, I (John Marshall, [1805?]), John Bewick tailpiece, p.35. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1805 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.22 *Cobwebs* (Baldwin and Cradock, 1837), tailpiece, p. 44. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1837 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.23 *Cobwebs* (Crosby, Lockwood and Co., [1885]), 'Little Jack Horner' tailpiece, p. 18. Copy from my own collection.

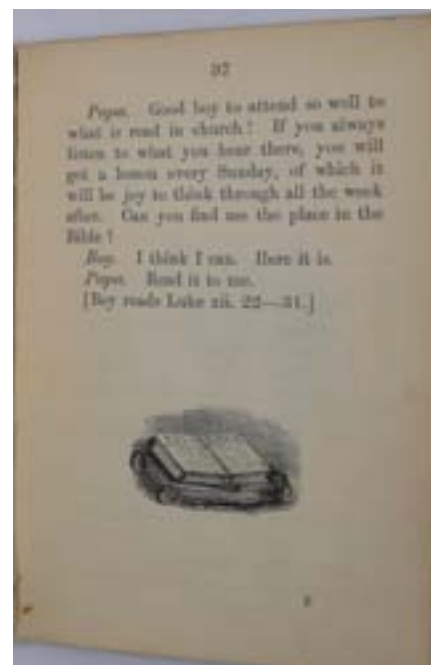


Fig. 6.24 *Cobwebs* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1852?]), tailpiece, p. 37. NAL 60.B.45. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

current fashions and decorating the empty space at the end of each dialogue, they usually bore little or no relation to the story. Baldwin, Cradock and Joy used tailpieces featuring children and animals in their 1815 edition. The Baldwin and Cradock editions of the eighteen-twenties and -thirties reflect the development of interest in medieval history in their depiction of weaponry, game animals, and regalia with a heraldic theme and were also stock printers' tailpieces (Fig. 6.22). Victorian concern about domestic animals, nature and wildlife may have provided inspiration for the vignettes used by the SPCK, Routledge, Darton & Co., and Crosby, Lockwood and Co., who also introduced nursery rhyme themes, such as Little Jack Horner (Fig. 6.23).⁶⁸ The SPCK inserted vignettes featuring bibles, church gates and children praying, to underline the religious nature of the book (Fig. 6.24). Frontispieces, tailpieces and other printers' ornaments thus contributed to the general character of each edition of *Cobwebs*, and by reflecting current interests helped to give a contemporary feel to the book.

Paper and typography

Overall, the various publishers maintained a good standard of printing production. Early editions used a good weight hand-made paper. Cheaper machine-made paper was not used in editions before 1800; the laid paper used in the 1805 and 1815 editions is of reasonable quality, although the latter is a little more flimsy, resulting in some bleed-through of type to the backing page. It is not until around the middle of the century that the coarser rag-based papers were replaced by sized machine-made papers processed from wood.⁶⁹ The smoother machine-processed paper gives the later books (SPCK editions onwards) a much more modern feel. The 'large clear type' that Fenn requested continued to be employed as a feature, with the type-size of the main text varying only marginally throughout the book's history. All of the editions have good leading, although experimentation with different typefaces sometimes made the text more difficult to read: for example, the condensed type used in the SPCK editions.

⁶⁸ *Cobwebs*, [1885], p. 18.

⁶⁹ For paper production see Gaskell, *New Introduction to Bibliography*, pp. 214-30. For the impact of the machine-press period see Brian Alderson, 'The making of children's books', in *CCCL*, ed. Grenby and Immel, pp. 35-54 (p. 41).

Various other small changes in style and punctuation can be noted, sometimes affecting the easy reading of the text. In editions up to 1825 the names of the speakers in the dialogues were centred, but thereafter were ranged left and italicised, making them more difficult to distinguish from the main text; double inverted commas to indicate speech were used at the beginning of every line in the prefatory material in eighteenth-century editions. When *Cobwebs* was first published the long s was still in common use, and early editions have it. It is dropped in the 1805 edition (Marshall) and reintroduced in the 1815 edition (Baldwin, Cradock and Joy), showing that it took some time to be phased out, probably due to shortage of new type.⁷⁰ Useful as these changes are in dating different copies, the really striking fact is the extent to which Fenn's text remained virtually unchanged over so long a period. Mavor's *English spelling book* (1801), another long-running title that remained in print throughout the nineteenth century, underwent many revisions in the author's own lifetime and was subject to radical adaptation by various publishers when the copyright ended in the 1840s.

Editing of language

There is very little change in the way that Fenn's dialogues are expressed up until editions of the mid-nineteenth century, and this marks the point at which *Cobwebs* was beginning to seem old-fashioned. In the Darton and Co. edition there is a conscious effort to modernise what must have seemed like outmoded language and punctuation. For example, 'Ah! my Kit' (1783, I, p. 28) becomes 'O cat!' (1858, p. 10). The editor also paraphrases some of the sentences, and adds or omits words to correct the 'inaccuracies', which Fenn pointed out were inevitable when writing only 'short words'.⁷¹ For example, when the mother is wondering whether her daughter will get bored with looking after her doll and want to take it back to the shop Fenn has her say, 'Will you not wish her [the doll] in the shop? I fear that you will---you who are so fond of play' (1783, I, p. 62), but Darton's editor simplifies it to read, 'I fear that you will not do all she [the doll] wants, you are so fond of play' (1858, p. 20). Crosby Lockwood and Co. retain this updated version for their 1885

⁷⁰ Stoker suggests use of long form 's' is a means of identifying eighteenth-century editions. See *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 12. However, its appearance in the 1815 edition proves it to be an unreliable marker.

⁷¹ *Cobwebs* [1783], I, xii. The Darton editor substitutes the word 'faults' in place of Fenn's word 'inaccuracies', to flag up the awkward mode of expression in the eighteenth-century dialogues.

edition, and to underline the importance of mothering include a full-page picture of a girl holding a baby, her doll lying at her feet to suggest that play had primed her mothering instinct.⁷² There had been a vast opening up of educational opportunity to women since *Cobwebs* had first been published. The girl playing with her doll, however, still exemplified the suitable female role.

The role of the publisher in positioning the book is clearly highlighted in the way that the SPCK altered the text in the 1840s to accentuate the moral and religious message in Fenn's stories, particularly about kindness to people and animals, charity, and the value of education in creating honest and upright citizens. This is demonstrated in the exaggeration of the act of generosity shown in 'The baby-house'. In the original version the first girl responds to the giving of money by saying: 'And you gave it to her. My doll should wear her old gown for a long time, for the sake of such a use to put my crown to' (1783, I, p. 94), but the text is edited to read: 'And you gave it to her? That was right. My doll...' (1852, p. 62). The addition of the question and affirmative judgement on the action emphasises the correct behaviour for a child by demonstrating the necessity of charity, rather than sentimentalising the act of giving as Fenn does in the original story.

Two stories from volume two – 'The fair' and 'The useful play' – were dropped by the SPCK, presumably to expurgate any reference to unsuitable entertainment. 'The Fan' is also extended into a two-part story to incorporate a sermon on God helping the weak, plus an exhortation to prayer. The 'lady' featured in the narrative is even shown to be reading to the children from the Bible to underline the religious message.⁷³ It is interesting to note that the SPCK was one of the religious organisations that had been recruited to introduce secular reading in schools for working-class children, a campaign which had originally been launched by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge in the 1830s, but had more recently been promoted by Government inspectors in the

⁷² *Cobwebs* [1885], p. 58.

⁷³ The passages are specified as Mark x: 13-16 and Luke xi: 1-4. *Cobwebs* (1852), p. 27.

1840s.⁷⁴ One inspector noted ‘the right use of good secular reading-books appears to contribute to the more reverent use, as well as to the better understanding, of the Bible’.⁷⁵ The society’s adaptation of *Cobwebs*, for use in elementary schools, was consistent with this ‘right use’ of secular reading books.⁷⁶ Other reading primers of the period similarly promoted Christian values. Favell Lee Mortimer (née Bevan, 1802-1878), for example, produced two highly successful reading schemes, *Reading disentangled* (1836), and *Reading without tears* (1857), which taught reading within the framework of a religious education, making them highly attractive to institutions promoting moral education, as well as to Christian families.⁷⁷

Crosby Lockwood and Co.’s 1885 edition also highlights *Cobwebs*’ Christian message. In the edited version of the author’s letter, ‘Address to My Little Readers’, a passage has been inserted to emphasize the book’s suitability for children of Christian families: ‘God sees you in your play and says to you: “Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is right”’.⁷⁸ It is clear, then, that the moral content of the dialogues in *Cobwebs* continued to feel appropriate right up to the late Victorian period, perhaps because the tone of Fenn’s exhortations to good behaviour was always tempered with good humour. The strengthening of the Christian message by some publishers, particularly the explicit sermonising of the Evangelical SPCK edition, demonstrates that early reading books were considered effective vehicles for the transmission of moral teaching.⁷⁹ It is also clear from the positioning of these editions that publishers were responding to government directives on children’s reading, and using *Cobwebs*

74 J. M. Goldstrom, ‘The Content of Education and the Socialization of the Working-class Child 1830-1860’, in *Popular Education and Socialization in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Phillip McCann (Methuen, 1977), pp 93-109, (pp. 100-1). Goldstrom examines how a secular model of literacy, designed to meet the needs of the political economy, challenged the Bible-based system of education, resulting in the publication of non-denominational readers, such as the SPCK’s *Reading Books* (1851-6).

75 Minutes of the Committee of Council on Education, 1845, Vol. I, p. 214, cited in Goldstrom, *The Content of Education and the Socialization of the Working-class Child*, p. 101 (108 n.).

76 The SPCK edition was used in elementary schools. See Ellis, *A History of Children’s Reading*, p. 18, also Alec Ellis, *Books in Victorian Elementary Schools*, Library Association Pamphlet 34 (London: The Library Association, 1971), p. 9. Chalmers lists *Cobwebs* as a school reader in *Reading Easy 1800-50*, p. 130. For the interaction of the home and school curriculum, see David Vincent, ‘The Domestic and the Official Curriculum in Nineteenth-Century England’, in *Opening the Nursery Door*, ed. Hilton, Styles and Watson, pp. 161-79.

77 For the growth in reading books following the Factory Act of 1833, see Chalmers, *Reading Easy 1800-50*, p. 37. *Reading disentangled* is listed in the Committee of Council schedules of 1847, and *Reading without tears* introduced the phonic system, *ibid.*, p. 145. See also Vincent, ‘The Domestic and the Official Curriculum’.

78 *Cobwebs* [1885], p. viii.

79 For a succinct explanation of the implicit and explicit operations of ideology in children’s literature, see Peter Holindale, ‘Ideology and the Children’s Book’, *Signal* 55 (1988), 3-32, also John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children’s Fiction* (London and NY: Longman, 1996, first publ. 1992), pp. 8-11.

to make inroads into the lucrative school market, resulting in a wider distribution of the book.

Illustration of the ‘The Morning’

In Chapter Two I showed that the illustrations in *Cobwebs* helped to establish it as a popular reading book for young children. However, comparison of the illustration of one story, ‘The morning’, across the sample editions highlights the challenges publishers faced in updating the book for successive generations. New illustrations added to production costs, so it is not surprising that blocks were often reused, being replaced only when they became too worn or old-fashioned in style. Five different woodcuts or engravings were used to illustrate ‘The morning’, each one offering a different perspective on the story about a mother waking her son and the conversation they have about his wish to visit the toy shop. The various illustrations reflect the gradual shift in views of childhood, but also reveal the difficulties in maintaining the integrity of picture and text that Fenn envisaged.

Illustration: The early Georgian period 1783-1820

The Marshall editions were illustrated with an oval woodcut cartouche, framed with a decorative ornament. It shows a boy sitting up in bed, rubbing his eyes as the sun streams in from the window, while his mother stands beside him, pointing her finger as if instructing him to get up (Fig. 6.25). The bedroom is simply furnished; a low child’s bed, with a valance covering the frame, is positioned beside the glazed Georgian bay window. The boy wears a simple nightshirt, and his slippers are neatly placed by the bed on the wide-planked floor. The mother has a long dress, shawl and cap to cover her well-coiffed hair. It is a simple picture, which provides an accurate visual cue to the text, and represents a middle-class home that a child reader might recognise as being similar to his own.

The illustrator’s decision to focus on the mother’s duty in waking the child is an obvious one, as it would have been difficult to convey the dialogic exchange about the plans for the day ahead; nevertheless, the scene in the frame draws attention to the mother’s role as regulator of a child’s behaviour, thus underscoring Fenn’s



Fig. 6.25 *Cobwebs, I* (J. Marshall and Co., [1789?]), 'The morning', p. 31. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]



Fig. 6.26 *Cobwebs, I* (John Marshall, [1783; 1799?]), 'The morning', p. 22. NAL 60.Z.189 (e). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.27 *Cobwebs, I* (John Marshall, [1805?]), 'The morning', p. 14. NAL REN: AA.FENE.CO.1805. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.28 *Cobwebs, I* (Baldwin, Cradock & Joy, 1815), 'The morning', p. 22. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1815 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

intention to foster good habits in her child readers. The illustration was decorated with a new printer's ornament in the 1799 edition (Fig. 6.26).⁸⁰ The same image was used in Marshall's 1805 edition, despite his updating of the cover, by which time the block was showing signs of wear (Fig. 6.27).

The wear to the block perhaps explains why Baldwin, Cradock and Joy use a different wood cut to illustrate 'The morning' in the 1815 edition, even though most of the others pictures in the edition remained unchanged.⁸¹ The substitute picture gives the story a completely different representation. It shows the boy in the dining-room, and he has clearly been awake for some time, because he is formally dressed in a long coat, breeches and stockings (Fig. 6.28). A female figure, possibly an older sister, or a servant, chats to the boy as he helps himself to the breakfast set out on a large table. The didacticism of the original illustration has been replaced with a blander allusion to privilege; the setting for the illustration does not fulfil Fenn's requirement of authentic pictorial representation.

Illustration: The late Georgian period 1820s-1840s

A similarly loose interpretation of Fenn's text for 'The morning' is shown in Baldwin, Cradock and Joy's new set of illustrations for the revamped 1822 edition of *Cobwebs*, which were also used in the editions issued in the 1830s. The picture appears to be set in the bedroom, with a dressing table in front of the long glazed window, however the child is shown out of his bed (Fig. 6.29). Rays of sunlight from the window light up the figures of the mother and child in the semi-dark room, which heightens the dramatic effect. The mother is seated in a chair, wearing an empire line dress and a modest bonnet, thus bringing the clothes up to date, while the child standing next to her is dressed in his nightwear of short-sleeved smock and loose trousers. The child has his hands placed in his mother's lap and she is leaning forward, with one hand placed on her son's head and the other touching his shoulder in a semi-embrace, suggesting an affectionate relationship, in which emotional support is considered more important than regulation of behaviour.

⁸⁰ This is the V&A NAL edition 60,Z.189 (e), which is incorrectly dated 1783.

⁸¹ The woodcut for 'The baby-house' in the 1815 edition (I, p. 68) is the same used for 'Useful play' (II, p. 66). For replacement of worn blocks, and mistakes in picture ordering, see Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, pp. 6-7, and Stoker, 'Ellenor Fenn', p. 826.



Fig. 6.29 *Cobwebs, I* (Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, 1825), 'The morning', p. 26. NAL 60.O.41. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.30 *Cobwebs* (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, [1852?]), 'The morning', p. 3. NAL 60.B.45. Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.31 *Cobwebs* (Darton & Co., 1858), 'The morning', p. 12. NAL AA.FENE.CO.1858 (REN). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.32 *Cobwebs* (Crosby, Lockwood and Co., [1885]), 'The morning', p. 12. Copy from my own collection.

Illustration: The early Victorian period 1840s-1860s

The illustrations introduced by Baldwin, Cradock and Joy were used in further editions from the publisher and its successors, but were also used by Darton & Co. in the 1850s, and even later by Crosby, Lockwood and Co. in the 1880s, even though the covers had been updated and other features of the books had changed. (Figs. 6.31-6.32). This suggests that a more informal model for parenting had relevance well into the Victorian period, although by the 1880s the Regency dress shown in the pictures may also have had a certain amount of period charm; Kate Greenaway's popular books similarly featured children in empire line dresses and bonnets.

It is interesting to observe that in the illustration for the editions published by the SPCK in the 1840s and 1850s, the mother, formally dressed in Victorian dress and bonnet, is shown standing by the child's bed in a more distant pose (Fig. 6.30). The bedroom is well furnished, and the high bed, covered with tiered bedspread and canopied with curtains, cocoons the child, suggesting a desire to protect him in a safe environment. This would have been consistent with the SPCK's idea of the family home providing a refuge from the outside world, in which the mother would monitor and regulate the child's behaviour and protect him from undesirable influences. The illustration is a very high-quality woodcut by an accomplished artist, as was typical of SPCK children's books. The chiaroscuro effect of the dark and light in the unframed ovoid vignette adds dramatic emphasis to the scene of mother and child, accentuating the importance of the relationship.

Illustration: The late Victorian period 1870s-1890s

The illustration for the 1870s Routledge editions ignores the narrative context, focusing on the infant asleep in his crib bed, with no clues to the domestic interior, other than the drapes at the top of the bed (Fig. 6.33). The angelic child's face is framed with curls, and rests on a plumped up pillow in peaceful slumber; no attempt has been made to indicate that the child is about to be woken. However, even though the mother is not pictured, the androgynous child is clearly well looked after; he has well-cut hair, is dressed in nightwear and is



Fig. 6.33 *Cobwebs* (George Routledge and Sons, 1871), 'The morning'. © British Library Board 12803.aaa.30.



Fig. 6.34 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne; NY: Scribner, Welford, and Co., [ca. 1870]), 'The morning'. BI LOV 1870. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto, Canada:



Fig. 6.35 *Cobwebs* (Frederick Warne, [1894?]), 'The morning'. BI LOV 1894. Courtesy of Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto, Canada:

neatly tucked in under the coverlet. The illustrator has placed greater emphasis on the creation of mood, rather than providing a pictorial reference for the text; the peacefulness of the child is accentuated in this idealised image, which is typical of the romanticised representations of childhood shown in Victorian popular culture.⁸² It would have been impossible for publishers of *Cobwebs* to keep pace with the new approach to illustration adopted by Crane. However, the engravings used in the Warne editions of the 1870s and 1890s (in framed and unframed versions) reflect the pastoral themes that are present in many of Crane's works, particularly the *Baby* books (Figs. 6.34-6.35). The illustrator has associated the idea of the morning milking of cows with the boy's early rising; he is shown outside walking with his mother at sunrise as the milkmaid carries her bucket across a field. The picture is beautifully executed and highly atmospheric, but does not directly relate to the text.

Comparison of the different illustrations for 'The morning' thus demonstrates a shift away from direct representation of the text, to a more liberal interpretation of the story in some later editions, almost certainly because it had become difficult for the illustrator to reinterpret the text for a modern audience. The mother and child are shown to have a close bond in all but one of the illustrations, and in this respect, at least, the illustrations can be seen to have responded to an important part of Fenn's original agenda. Economic reasons largely account for the considerable reuse of pictures. However, changing the illustration gave publishers the opportunity to create a more contemporary appearance, and helped to reinforce the ideological message of the text.

Critical responses to *Cobwebs*

It is clear that illustration played an important part in the appeal of *Cobwebs* and its reception in the marketplace, but as the nineteenth century progressed the old-fashioned nature of the dialogues inevitably posed a challenge to publishers wanting to update the book. A reviewer of the Crosby Lockwood and Co. edition

⁸² For the way in which the visualisation of the modern child initiated by artists in the Romantic period permeated popular culture by the middle of the nineteenth century, see 'Every Mother's Child', in Anne Higonnet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (Thames and Hudson, 1998), pp. 31-49.

of 1885, while judging that the book ‘is well suited to its purpose so far as its matter is concerned’, criticised the ‘antiquated’ cuts, labelling them ‘worse than useless’ because they did not ‘enhance the value of the text’.⁸³ The reviewer’s concern relates to visual literacy: ‘[Is] it not as important that the child’s artistic sense should be educated and developed as its intelligence?’ The 1885 edition in question was printed with the same cuts as those introduced by Baldwin, Cradock & Joy in 1825 and re-used by Darton & Co. in the 1850s, showing mothers and children in decidedly outmoded dress, in old-fashioned room settings. The use of the old illustrations raised the bile of another local newspaper reviewer, who grudgingly acknowledged the ‘well-arranged and instructive matter’ in the ‘old-fashioned little compilation’, but could not recommend the book:

It does not follow that because the wretched pictures our grandsires were treated to were sufficient for the day, that the children of this day should have such poor productions put before them.⁸⁴

These comments reflect the fact that interest had been aroused in cultivating artistic awareness in young readers; both Cole and Crane had argued for it to be a vital consideration in the production of children’s books.

Margaret Gatty, writing in *The Monthly Packet*, had referred to the inferiority of books available to earlier generations of readers, with specific reference to the illustration in *Cobwebs*: ‘[H]ow it would amuse you to see what used to be called “beautiful cuts” in those days.’⁸⁵ Crosby Lockwood’s complacency in publishing a well-known book with old-fashioned illustrations, albeit with a sparkling new cover and decorative embellishments, probably determined that interest in *Cobwebs*, which had already been waning, would eventually die out. The disjunction between the story and the pictorial reference of everyday life, which failed to reflect the

⁸³ *Glasgow Herald* (Glasgow, Scotland), Friday, 21 August, 1885, p. 4.

⁸⁴ ‘Literary Notices’, *The Ipswich Journal*, 4 August 1885.

⁸⁵ Margaret Gatty, *The Monthly Packet*, 126 (June 1, 1861), p. 582. Charlotte Yonge, the magazine’s editor, made the protagonist of one of her children’s books refer to *Cobwebs* as a ‘serious cloud’ in the nursery. See *The daisy chain* (John W. Parker & Son, 1856), p. 12. Yonge is equally disparaging of *Cobwebs* in her historical review of children’s literature, suggesting that it had been ‘displaced’ by later books such as *Early lessons* (she misnames Barbauld’s *Lessons*, confusing it with Edgeworth’s title). Miss [Charlotte] Yonge, ‘Nursery Books of the Eighteenth Century’, (Part one of ‘Children’s Literature of the Last Century’), *Macmillan’s Magazine*, July 1869, 229-37 (p. 234).

experience of contemporary children in late nineteenth-century Britain, undoubtedly made it less attractive as a reader.

However, for all the bad press that *Cobwebs* eventually attracted, many held fond memories of the pleasure that the book had given in reading. The brothers Sir Henry Bartle Frere (1815-1884) and William Frere remark in a memoir of their uncle John Hookham Frere (1769-1846), for whose brother William the book had been written: ‘There are many now living who can recollect receiving their first reading-lessons in “Cobwebs to Catch Flies”’.⁸⁶ The philanthropist Louisa Twining (1820-1912), writing in her autobiography, recalls *Cobwebs* as ‘the then first book of all children’, which she kept in her personal library bag, and ‘duly studied and read over and over’.⁸⁷ The American author, historian and Unitarian clergyman Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909), similarly expressed his ‘grateful regards’ for *Cobwebs* as one of the books that helped him read at dame school.⁸⁸ Dorothea Lind, daughter of James Lind (1736-1812), the royal physician at Windsor, was given the volumes in 1794, which were inscribed with her name (Figs. 6.36-6.39).⁸⁹ In her memoir Elizabeth Smith (1797-1885) recalls her sister Jane reading the family copy of *Cobwebs* at the age of three, and the book was also the first reader of the physicist George Stokes (1819-1903).⁹⁰ J. S. Mill (1806-1873) learned to read from *Cobwebs* at the age of two and a half, as did the explorer Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911), for whose family it appears to have been a favourite reading book as both Charles Darwin (1809-1882) and Ralph Vaughan Williams

86 Henry Bartle and William Frere, ‘Memoir’, in *The Works of J. H. F. Hookham Frere in Verse and Prose, now First Collected with a Prefatory Memoir*, 2 vols (Basil Montague Pickering, 1872), I, p. xv (n. 2).

87 Louisa Twining, *Recollections of Life and Work. Being the Autobiography of Louisa Twining* (London: Edward Arnold, 1893), p. 16, and p. 32. Twining corroborates Welch’s comment that *Cobwebs* was ‘a famous book’, which for more than fifty years ‘continued to be the most popular first reading book for the very little ones in England and in America’. See Welch, ‘A Forgotten Primer and its Author’, *Athenaeum*, p. 94, *Bibliographer*, p. 191. An earlier article noted ‘so many pretty careless flies have been first caught in the toils of learning [by *Cobwebs*]’; see ‘Literature for Children’, *Westminster Review*, 33, October 1839, 137-62 (p. 153).

88 Rev. Dr. Edward E. Hale, in “*Books that have Helped Me*” [by various authors]. Reprinted from “*The Forum*” (NY: D. Appleton, 1888), pp. 5-14 (p. 5).

89 See matching inscriptions in different London libraries, V&A NAL 60.Z.189 (c) and IOE, Baines 144, II [17--?]. Dorothea Sophia Banks Gossett (1787-1863) was the fourth of James Lind’s five children. See W. G. Bebbington, ‘A Friend of Shelley’, *Notes and Queries*, 7(3) (1960), 83-93 (p. 83). See also Thompson Cooper, rev. Patrick Wallis, ‘Lind, James (1736-1812)’, *ODNB*.

90 George Gabriel Stokes, *Memoir and Scientific Correspondence of the late Sir George Gabriel Stokes. Vol. I* (Cambridge: CUP, 1907), p. 3. [Elizabeth Smith], *Memoirs of a Highland lady. The Autobiography of Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, afterwards Mrs Smith of Baltiboy 1797-1827*, ed. Lady Strachey (John Murray, 1898), p. 26.

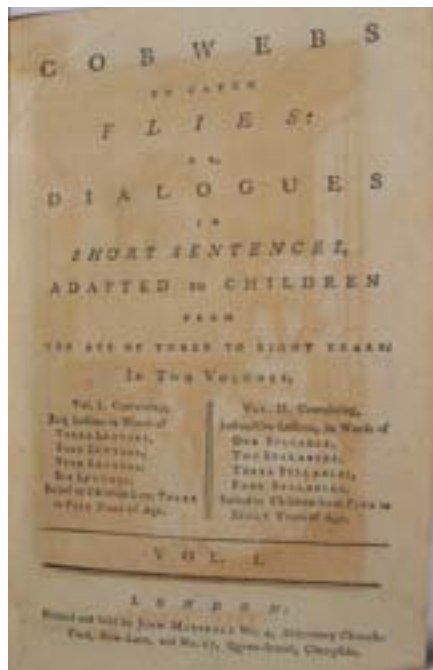


Fig. 6.36 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [ca. 1790; 1794?]), I, title page. NAL 60.Z.189 (c). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.37 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [ca. 1790; 1794?]), I, inscription. NAL 60.Z.189 (c). Courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.



Fig. 6.38 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [17--?; 1794?]), II, title page. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]

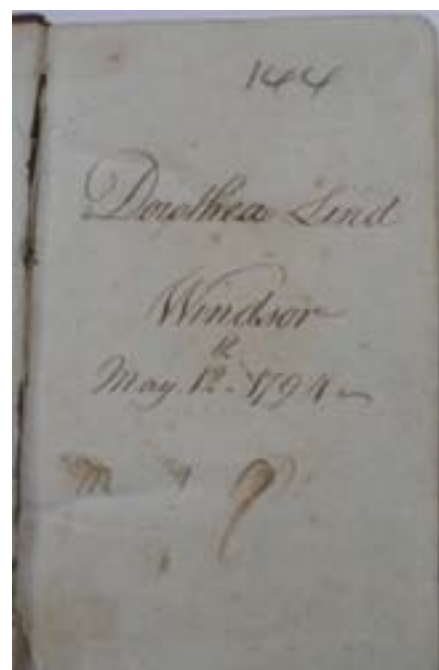


Fig. 6.39 *Cobwebs* (John Marshall, [17--?; 1794?]), II, inscription. By permission of the Institute of Education Special Collections, University of London, [Baines 144]

(1872-1958) also learned from it.⁹¹ This passing down of *Cobwebs* through the generations undoubtedly helped perpetuate its success.⁹²

The recommendation of trusted educationists also bolstered the reputation of the title. Trimmer endorsed *Cobwebs* as one of ‘a number of useful and ingenious works [of Fenn] which have been so justly valued by the public’, and Elizabeth Appleton (c. 1790-1849), another reforming moralist, likewise commended the teaching method in Fenn’s ‘pretty story book for children’ to mothers and governesses.⁹³ *Cobwebs* was even mentioned by children’s writers as an example of useful early reading: the Rev. Charles Taylor has the teenage protagonist of his novel *Margaret, or The pearl* (1844) remember *Cobwebs* as ‘that little book I was so fond of as a child’, and Maria Edgeworth has a child character learn French from the translation in *Frank: A sequel to Frank in early lessons* (1822).⁹⁴ Fenn’s first reader was clearly a book that had earned itself a place in cultural history, which may explain the continuation of its charm as a reader in Victorian Britain.

In a nostalgic review of old children’s books from the previous century, the Victorian historian Andrew Tuer featured some pages from *Cobwebs* in his celebratory history, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children’s Books*, including a title-page and one of the original illustrations from ‘The fair’, as quaint reminders of a literature that had been displaced.⁹⁵ A reviewer of Tuer’s book found the extract – about the two boys virtuously regulating their own behaviour in ‘The fair’ – highly amusing and wondered: ‘Now, were boys ever like this, or did their parents or teachers merely wish them to be?’⁹⁶ The last edition of *Cobwebs* had appeared only four years earlier,

91 For the reference to J. S. Mill, see John G. Howells, *Modern Perspectives in Child Psychiatry* (NY: Brunner Mazel, 1971), p. 40. Galton’s reading experience is recounted in Nicholas Wright Gilham, *A Life of Sir Francis Galton: From African Exploration to the Birth of Eugenics* (Oxford: OUP, 2001), p. 24. For the references to Darwin and Ralph Vaughan Williams, see Stoker, *Cobwebs to Catch Flies*, p. 3.

92 The importance of ‘ex-children’ in establishing the reputation of children’s books is noted by Deborah Stevenson, ‘Classics and Canons’, in *CCCL*, ed. by Grenby and Immel, pp. 108-23 (p. 109).

93 Trimmer, *Guardian of Education*, I, p. 124. Elizabeth Appleton, *Early Education: or, The Management of Children Considered with a View to their Future Character* (Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1820), p. 291-2. See also pp. 328 for endorsement of Fenn works. For Appleton’s reputation as a society educationist see E. H. Chalus, ‘Appleton, Elizabeth (c.1790-1849)’, *ODNB*.

94 Rev. Charles B. Taylor, *Margaret, or The pearl* (Longman Brown, Green and Longman, 1844), p. 125. Edgeworth, Maria, *Frank: A sequel to Frank in early lessons* (Printed for R. Hunter, 1822), pp. 228-30.

95 Andrew W. Tuer, *Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children’s Books*, pp. 21-3.

96 ‘Arts and ‘Entertainment’, in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (London), 17 November 1898.

but this comment indicates that it wasn't just the pictures that were now considered out of date, nor that the book was simply 'lacking in modern embellishment', as Welch contended in his 1901 article; the moral dialogues themselves had become laughable. After more than a century, *Cobwebs* had finally been consigned to history.

Summary

My case study of the long publishing history of *Cobwebs* demonstrates that it remained in print throughout the nineteenth century primarily because publishers were able to reformulate the book in response to the changing requirements of the emerging nursery market. Close reading of the complex 'signs' outlined by McKenzie – including cover designs, production, language, illustration, as well as reception of the book – has facilitated a partial recreation of the historical dynamics of the book's making and reading, highlighting the interrelationship of author, publisher, printer, illustrator and reader in creating each new edition of *Cobwebs*.

Rejuvenation of *Cobwebs* was achieved largely through significant changes to the presentation and make-up of the book, demonstrating publishers' awareness of the need to update *Cobwebs* for new generations of readers. This is particularly evident in the changes to cover design, which show publishers responding to competition from new styles of nursery literature. Technological developments in materials and print machinery, which made *Cobwebs* much cheaper and simpler to produce as time went on, are effectively charted in the restyling of the covers. However, publishers could never entirely keep pace with developments in illustration and design, and eventually the book came to look out-dated.

The relative stability of Fenn's text is remarkable, suggesting that her narratives responded to the essential needs of children learning to read. The dialogues reflected the daily events a child might experience in any period of modern history – getting up, playing and going shopping, as well as learning to read – recreating typical conversations between a mother and child. The narrative content, with its focus on harmonious family living, good behaviour, love of nature and generosity to the poor, represented enduring values for the upper- and middle-class parents

buying the book for their children. *Cobwebs* only went out of fashion at the point when the social details relating to home life and schooling no longer reflected the contemporary experience of childhood. Nevertheless, the model for Fenn's domestic stories was highly influential for authors throughout the nineteenth century and is still in evidence today.⁹⁷ *Cobwebs* proved to be a dynamic and resilient first reading book, which not only helped establish a discrete market for nursery books at the end of the eighteenth century, but continued to sustain the new publishing sector throughout the nineteenth century.

97 The influence of *Cobwebs* on books such as Mrs Barwell's *Remember, or Mamma's birthday*, is noted in 'Literature for Children', *Westminster Review*, 33.1, October 1839, p. 153. The modern equivalent of Fenn's stories is represented in the domestic nursery stories of twentieth century authors such as Dorothy Edwards and Shirley Hughes, and in reading schemes like The Oxford Reading Tree.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have outlined aspects of the development of the market for nursery literature between the years 1783 and 1900 to show that a discrete nursery sector developed during the period. I have traced the links between the first home-reading scheme and the introduction of mass-market colour-printed picturebooks, showing that four key developments created the shifts in the style of nursery books that established picturebooks as the dominant form of nursery reading: the commercialisation of home reading material with a visual component; the creation of mass-market books with series links; the development of a canon, or ‘tradition’ of nursery literature; and the instatement of high-quality illustration and design.

These developments did not occur in isolation, nor were they directly progressive. I have suggested that the nursery market developed incrementally, through a confluence of social, cultural and economic forces that facilitated the emergence of new forms of early reading material. This accumulation of evidence synthesizes the contributions of authors, illustrators, designers, editors, publishers, printers and booksellers in bringing the books to the market, as well as taking into account the influence of parents buying the books and the children who read them. Approached in this way, the first reading book, whatever its nature or design, has proved a fertile depository of evidence about childhood in the period, as well as about the objectives of the creators, publishers and purchasers of children’s books. Detailed examination of the entire ‘communications circuit’, as Darnton envisaged it, has enabled reconstruction, at least in part, of the social and commercial contexts of children’s early reading books.¹

Each chapter has highlighted significant trends that successfully influenced shifts in the market. All of the individuals selected for this study showed extraordinary skill or determination to implement new styles of nursery literature during their era, demonstrating the importance of amateur writers, dynamic publishers, creative children’s editors and talented illustrators and designers in establishing nursery

¹ Darnton, ‘What is the History of Books?’, pp. 11-12, 21.

books as a discrete sector of the children's market. However, it has not been my intention to suggest that change was effected by their efforts alone; I have indicated that a number of agents contributed to the process. Key developments occurred as publishers responded to the changing requirements of parents for their children's education. My analysis has highlighted the cultural conditions that shaped ideas about children's education and future prospects, as well as changing notions about how children might be amused by their reading, showing the effect this had on the types of books being produced for use in middle-class homes. As outlined in Chapter One, efforts to increase literacy amongst the poorer classes led publishers to take interest in books that might cross from the home nursery to the lucrative school market. The involvement of religiously motivated publishers – such as the Darton firm (Quaker), the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and the Religious Tract Society – in providing teaching material for use in Sunday schools, factory schools and the State Education System has been touched on in relation to the reformulation of *Cobwebs* as a school reader (see Chapter Six), but the extent of this influence on the development of the nursery market as a whole warrants further investigation.²

Ellenor Fenn's series of illustrated books, games and teaching guides for mothers, modelled on her home-made books and games, represents the first important step in the creation of a separate market for nursery books. Marshall brought to the public an entire set of books and games that Fenn had devised to teach children to read, creating an instant home-learning programme, which, with its emphasis on advancement through education and strong moral underpinning, was perfectly tailored to the goals and aspirations of the emerging middle-classes. It is clear that from the outset of the period publishers recognised that very young children needed their own specially contrived literature. Ellenor Fenn's *Cobwebs*, shown in the title as suitable for three- to eight-year-olds, was one of the first books to provide progressive lessons for children to help them become competent readers.

2 Jill Shefrin's study, *The Dartons*, provides a comprehensive listing of the firm's prodigious output of teaching aids across a range of subjects for children of all ages, but there is no comparable study of the SPCK, or the RTS.

Fenn's reading scheme established a number of important features of nursery books, which future publishers used as a model: large well-spaced type, simple graded texts, and stories about everyday life. The development of picturebook reading in this study can be traced back to Fenn's insistence on illustrations to support the text; each generation of books moved closer towards visually oriented methods of learning (Harris's coloured picture rhymes, through to Cole's superior artist-illustrated books, to Crane's picture narratives). Fenn's educational game, which demonstrated the value of play in learning, paved the way for reading games and alphabet sets, and they became a permanent feature during the period; the influence of *Set of toys* on the marketing of educational apparatus is evident in the teaching aids produced in support of the Dale readers at the turn of the twentieth century.

John Harris, one of the most enterprising publishers operating at the start of the nineteenth century, successfully promoted a range of experimental rhyming books that encouraged the idea of young children learning to read purely for entertainment. The success of his top-selling titles showed the possibility for mass-market nursery literature and demonstrated even more effectively than John Marshall that promotional series helped to boost sales and stimulate the overall growth of the market. Harris's series of coloured picture reading books in rhyme created an entirely new subsection within the nursery market, dramatically expanding the range of books available for very young children. There were growing numbers of children as a proportion of the population, which would have increased the potential for sales exponentially.³ This new genre emerged at a time when the Romantics' discourse on childhood questioned whether moral literature would help or harm a young child's education, and indicates an important deviation from the anti-fairy tale agenda promoted by publishers like John Marshall at the end of the eighteenth century. However, as Harris continued to promote the works of successful late-eighteenth century moral writers such as Fenn, it is clear that he was not adopting a revolutionary stance with his new-style books; he was a pragmatic entrepreneur exploring new ways to expand his business.

Henry Cole's Home Treasury series was similarly launched against the backdrop

³ From 1750 there was an upward trend in the child population; by 1826 the number of children under fifteen was 1,120 for every 1,000 adults. See Margaret Kinnell, 'Publishing for Children 1700-1780', p. 29.

of heated debate concerning the effects of science-based education and its lack of imaginative content, which echoed through the nineteenth century like a guiding mantra. The editing of *Cobwebs* by the SPCK for Sunday School use, as well as the RTS's adoption of its formula to create a Peter Parley-style religious reader occurred during a brief resurgence of overtly didactic publications, in which Evangelical literature predominated. Cole's wholesale rejection of such literature helped to direct the nursery market into the next phase of its development. As the first children's editor, 'Felix Summerly', Cole consolidated the nursery canon, bringing together fairy tales, modern stories, nursery rhymes, fables, myths and other classics, to create a complete nursery library that accentuated the importance of imaginative rather than rationalist literature, thus embracing the European tradition of children's literature, while seeking to counteract the influence of the American Goodrich ('Peter Parley') in the English nursery. The Home Treasury series set new standards for the design and illustration of children's books, with its use of acclaimed artists and superior printing and binding. Attuned to Victorian interest in art and architecture, it was novel in its aim to cultivate aesthetic awareness in children as they learned to read, encouraging a more discerning audience for children's books among both parents and children.

Walter Crane's well-designed books followed almost seamlessly in the wake of Cole's series. Crane and his printer Edmund Evans took full advantage of technological advances in colour reproduction and print machinery to create artistic colour-printed toy books designed for the mass-market, although it is interesting to note that they favoured Bewick's wood-engraving technique over the modern chromolithographic method of production. Artistic flair was essential to achieve the best results; technology alone did not ensure high standards of art and design, a fact that Cole had already proved in his earlier experiments with print techniques. Crane's imaginative series of Baby books, and experimental educational titles, opened up a significant new sector within the nursery market, attracting many imitations of his innovative designs.

The children's publishing market was continually alive to innovation and experimentation, even though publishers were often risk averse. As demonstrated

in the case of *Cobwebs*, *The butterfly's ball*, *Mother Hubbard*, *Nursery songs* and the Routledge toy books, publishers proceeded cautiously, starting with small print runs of a few thousand copies for new titles and reprinting if brisk sales indicated demand. However, the many imitations of these books demonstrate the powerful influence that successful innovations exerted in the nursery market, setting new trends, stimulating competition and expanding overall sales. Nevertheless, while the boost given to the market by popular titles such as *The butterfly's ball* was important for development of mass-marketing within the nursery sector, the literary quality of such books was also essential to their survival; many of the 'papillonades' fell by the wayside because they were poor imitations of Roscoe's original poem. This underlines the fact that publishers needed skill in picking winning authors and illustrators. It wasn't simply a question of making the books available.

Publishers played a vital role in the distribution of children's books and the development of an international market. *Cobwebs*' translation into French before 1800 shows children's publishers were cultivating trade beyond the English market from an early stage. As Cole's promotion of fairy tales and his rejection of 'Peter Parley' highlights, the European and American literature enriched the English nursery canon and stimulated competition. The pirating and imitation of books like *Cobwebs* by American publishers helped to stimulate growth of their own nursery market and by the latter quarter of the nineteenth century it was common for titles to be issued simultaneously in London and New York, as Crane's books published by Routledge, Cassell, Warne and John Lane demonstrate.

Parents, too, had a role in the shaping of the nursery market. It is evident that while some parents were receptive to new styles of literature that might educate and amuse their children, others retained a loyalty and affection for books they enjoyed when they were learning to read themselves (although we cannot discount the possibility that parents might have purchased both old- and new-style books). The example of *Cobwebs*, the most remarkable among many long-running nursery titles, indicates that the passing down of well-loved nursery books through the generations was instrumental in the building of profitable backlists. The continuing charm of *Mother*

Hubbard, The butterfly's ball and *Baby's opera* is witness to the timeless character of some of the most successful books. From this secure sales base publishers could risk the launch of radical new-style titles. This indicates the market was always ripe for experiment, but that publishers simultaneously resisted change by establishing nursery classics to ensure the profitability of their business. The developing nursery market thus proved to be as conservative as it was revolutionary.

However, the *Cobwebs* case study demonstrates that in order to stimulate interest in existing titles for new generations of children, publishers needed to keep pace with new ideas, techniques and fashions. They could not afford simply to rest on past successes. Marshall's revamping of *Cobwebs* in a pretty pink cover at exactly the time that Harris was launching his exciting new books illustrates the galvanising effect of competition, enabling a staid moral reader to find its way into nineteenth-century nurseries. As McKenzie observes, 'new readers of course make new texts'.⁴ Giving the book a new cover and contemporary design features helped to give the impression of it being a modern book. All the new editions of *Cobwebs* have been shown to track key developments in design and print technology during the nineteenth century, which resulted in cheaper books. Moreover, the new illustrations in some editions of *Cobwebs* mirror changing attitudes to childhood, as shown in the comparisons of the illustration of 'The morning' in the sample of editions. Crane recognised this potential for books to reflect the age in which they were created:

[...] pictured-books may be called the hand-glass which still more intimately reflects the life of different centuries and peoples, in all their minute and homely detail and quaint domesticity, as well as their playful fancies, their dreams, and aspirations.⁵

Nevertheless, despite the seemingly radical shift from a rational to a romantic view of childhood, it has been shown that the essential values expressed by Fenn remained constant almost to the end of the Victorian era. This is underscored in

⁴ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, p. 29.

⁵ Walter Crane, *Of the Decorative Illustration of Books*, pp 2-3. Crane's teaching manual, based on his Cantor lectures, was first published in 1896 but was revised and added to in later editions.

Cole's retelling of fairy tales for Victorian children, in which he expresses similar views concerning obedience to parents, solid endeavour and social obligation to those expressed by Fenn in *Cobwebs*. These social prescriptions applied to all young children and throughout the period the nursery books examined in this study remained gender neutral; even though individual stories sometimes betrayed an underlying difference in social expectations for the different sexes, overall the books were intended to appeal to either boys or girls. Fenn's recognition of the need to provide instruction and teaching support for mothers also remained an important consideration throughout the period. Marian Cole's *Mother's primer*, along with Crane's reading schemes produced with Meiklejohn and Dale, incorporated many of the principles that informed Fenn's pedagogy: one-to-one mother and child teaching; short lessons to match a child's limited attention span; active learning; and text-related pictures to attract interest and give visual cues. Fenn's belief that children need only a rudimentary introduction to the alphabet and syllables before moving quickly to experience the achievement of reading a simple text was also a guiding principle in these primers. The understanding that children did not need formal reading preparation, but could learn by whatever means excited their interest, has also been shown to encourage diversity within the nursery market. It accounts for the fact that by the end of the period almost any picture-oriented book was considered suitable reading for very young children.

A two-way exchange occurred between books for the nursery and textbooks for schools. Fenn adapted the methods used in school primers to create suitable reading and grammar lessons for pre-school children, but educational publishers subsequently pirated passages from *Cobwebs* in their classroom primers. The SPCK's appropriation of *Cobwebs* as a school reader, and the RTS's imitation of its model for a Sunday School book, offers further evidence of its pervasive influence. The cross-pollination of commercial and school agendas is best demonstrated in the reading sets Crane produced with Meiklejohn and Dale. The artist's lively and engaging illustrations and theories on pictorial learning were perfectly attuned to the educationists' ideas for more visually oriented teaching schemes. Having become a household name following the success of his series of toy books and Baby

books, Crane was ideally placed to raise the profile of the Meiklejohn and Dale teaching schemes, ensuring their commercial success. It has been shown that the boundaries between home and schoolbooks became more fluid, so that by the end of the nineteenth century many titles were published for a dual market.

The development of a strong identity or 'brand' for the author or publisher has been accentuated in each chapter, along with the importance of the series link. Fenn became a trusted author under the 'Mrs Teachwell' banner, and Marshall made full use of her reputation, marketing the author's books and games in a reading scheme that encouraged purchase of all the components, as well as attracting multiple purchases by linking her teaching books to other simple readers in his list. Harris employed these marketing techniques even more effectively, creating mini-series from successful titles, such as *Mother Hubbard*, which he expanded to create lucrative sub-sets. Harris's cleverly contrived promotional list 'Harris's Cabinet of Amusement and Instruction', and the printing of his Juvenile Library logo on the series cover, shows that the publisher fully understood the need for effective marketing.

Cole went even further, issuing a provocative launch manifesto attacking his rivals, which clearly defined the Home Treasury as a series for the children of cultured Victorian parents. The artistic design and pretty colours of the covers established Cole as an arbiter of good taste in the nursery and ensured their instant recognition in the bookshop. Crane's toy books, Baby books, *Romance of the Three Rs*, *Golden primer* and 'Walter Crane Readers' were also sold in sets, showing that by the mid-to late nineteenth century this was common practice. Routledge and Warne even incorporated their editions of *Cobwebs* under series umbrellas, demonstrating that it was not just new titles that were marketed in this way. Cole's publication of the first Christmas card in 1843, the same year that Dickens published *A Christmas Carol*, has been seen as the emergence of the 'modern idea of Christmas as a phenomenon', and the advertising of 'Christmas lists' shows that publishers geared up for seasonal purchases.⁶ Routledge, Marcus Ward and Blackwoods all published Crane's books

⁶ Eliot, 'Some Trends in British Book Production', p. 34.

in the run up to Christmas and New Year, to take advantage of the gift market. Receiving books as presents also helped to reinforce the idea of reading books for pleasure. Ownership enabled children to take pride in their books and to become attached to favourites.

Although evidence is scant on readership, I have attempted to give some indication of children's reception of nursery books. For example, Louisa Twining's recollection of carrying a treasured copy of *Cobwebs* in her personal library bag, and the proud ownership inscription in the Home Treasury edition of *Spenser's Fairie Queen* announcing that the book was loved by a boy and his sister, offer illuminating impressions of what the books meant to the children who read them, or were expected to mean to them. As Grenby has recently highlighted, ownership inscriptions and marginalia can reveal important data, such as children's ages, their sex, whether it was a text- or gift-book, and even how often they read it.⁷ These extra-textual sources can also help us to locate where the books were being read, and to trace owners. For example, the addition of 'Windsor' to one of the matching inscriptions in Dorothea Lind's volumes of *Cobwebs* helped to track the book to the daughter of the royal physician James Lind (see Figs. 6.38-6.41). The separation of the Lind volumes in different locations calls for more detailed cross-referencing of children's book holdings in libraries and archives, as Bottigheimer has suggested.⁸ More carefully considered dating of books is also needed, as the various inaccurately listed editions of *Cobwebs* and Crane's toy books indicates. Further research into the activity of children's publishing houses, as exemplified in Masaki's award-winning study of the Routledge toy books, or studies of individual authors and illustrators, would also greatly assist other scholars of nursery literature.⁹ The accounts of how *Cobwebs* was read and remembered by young children suggest that investigation of the readership of other nursery titles would be fruitful. It would also be interesting to find more evidence of how the books were purchased.

7 In *The Child Reader* Grenby makes many references to inscriptions. For example, figure 8 (p. 46), which charts the 'Age at inscription' of books in the Cotsen, Hockliffe, Osborne and UCLA collections. The significance of location is examined on pp. 60-70.

8 Ruth B. Bottigheimer, 'The Book on the Bookseller's Shelf and the Book in the English Child's Hand', in *Culturing the Child*, ed. Ruwe, 3-28, (p. 13).

9 Masaki's *A History of Victorian Popular Picture Books*, the published version of her PhD thesis, won the F. J. Harvey Darton Award in 2006, given by the Children's Books History Society.

A cross-disciplinary approach, embracing literature, social and cultural history, the history of education, art history and the history of the book – a research process referred to by McKenzie as ‘bibliography as a sociology of texts’ – has enabled construction of a broad picture of this complex area of children’s book history with its myriad influences.¹⁰ The growth of the nursery market between 1783 and 1900 was principally driven by requirements for early education, social acculturation, as well as entertainment, but it is evident that publishers could surprise the market with unexpected treats such as *The butterfly’s ball*. Ellenor Fenn’s idea that amusement might be the ‘vehicle of instruction’ held true throughout the period, but proved to be a shifting concept. A copy of *Cobwebs* and an exciting reading game proved an entertaining means to reading accomplishment for late eighteenth-century children. Harris’s colour-illustrated books of amusing rhyme books offered a new style of book that could be collected in sets. By the 1840s it was possible for parents to provide children with a complete library of nursery literature illustrated with the drawings of old masters and the most accomplished artists of the day. In the mid- to late-Victorian period children could learn to read through beautifully designed picturebooks at home, and by the very end of the century these colour-illustrated books were even available in the school classroom. Writing in his 1897 retrospective on children’s books in *The Imprint*, Gleeson White noted that the improvement in children’s books since the late eighteenth century was due to the artist and publisher:

[...] the child occupies a new place in the world to-day. Excepting possibly certain royal infants, we do not find that great artists of the past addressed themselves to children.¹¹

Fenn, Harris and Cole all considered that pictures were central to children’s enjoyment of books and their success in reading, but Crane was one of the greatest exponents of the new view of childhood that emerged by the end of the nineteenth century. Writing in his preface to *The song of sixpence picture book* (1909), he

¹⁰ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, p. 28. See also Chapters One and Six for my implementation of this theory.

¹¹ White, ‘Children’s Books’, p. 6.

playfully commented that even ‘princesses’ could not do without alphabet books and offered his toy-book compilation as a pretty dish to set before ‘their Babyships’.¹²

Ultimately, it was Crane’s visual theories that had the greatest influence on young children’s early education at the end of the nineteenth century, shaping their experience of learning to read both at home and in the classroom and opening up new opportunities for publishers in the nursery market.

¹² Walter Crane, *The song of sixpence picture book* (London and NY: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909).

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have outlined aspects of the development of the market for nursery literature between the years 1783 and 1900 to show that a discrete nursery sector developed during the period. I have traced the links between the first home-reading scheme and the introduction of mass-market colour-printed picturebooks, showing that four key developments created the shifts in the style of nursery books that established picturebooks as the dominant form of nursery reading: the commercialisation of home reading material with a visual component; the creation of mass-market books with series links; the development of a canon, or 'tradition' of nursery literature; and the instatement of high-quality illustration and design.

These developments did not occur in isolation, nor were they directly progressive. I have suggested that the nursery market developed incrementally, through a confluence of social, cultural and economic forces that facilitated the emergence of new forms of early reading material. This accumulation of evidence synthesizes the contributions of authors, illustrators, designers, editors, publishers, printers and booksellers in bringing the books to the market, as well as taking into account the influence of parents buying the books and the children who read them. Approached in this way, the first reading book, whatever its nature or design, has proved a fertile depository of evidence about childhood in the period, as well as about the objectives of the creators, publishers and purchasers of children's books. Detailed examination of the entire 'communications circuit', as Darnton envisaged it, has enabled reconstruction, at least in part, of the social and commercial contexts of children's early reading books.¹

Each chapter has highlighted significant trends that successfully influenced shifts in the market. All of the individuals selected for this study showed extraordinary skill or determination to implement new styles of nursery literature during their era, demonstrating the importance of amateur writers, dynamic publishers, creative children's editors and talented illustrators and designers in establishing nursery

1 Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', pp. 11-12, 21.

books as a discrete sector of the children's market. However, it has not been my intention to suggest that change was effected by their efforts alone; I have indicated that a number of agents contributed to the process. Key developments occurred as publishers responded to the changing requirements of parents for their children's education. My analysis has highlighted the cultural conditions that shaped ideas about children's education and future prospects, as well as changing notions about how children might be amused by their reading, showing the effect this had on the types of books being produced for use in middle-class homes. As outlined in Chapter One, efforts to increase literacy amongst the poorer classes led publishers to take interest in books that might cross from the home nursery to the lucrative school market. The involvement of religiously motivated publishers – such as the Darton firm (Quaker), the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge and the Religious Tract Society – in providing teaching material for use in Sunday schools, factory schools and the State Education System has been touched on in relation to the reformulation of *Cobwebs* as a school reader (see Chapter Six), but the extent of this influence on the development of the nursery market as a whole warrants further investigation.²

Ellenor Fenn's series of illustrated books, games and teaching guides for mothers, modelled on her home-made books and games, represents the first important step in the creation of a separate market for nursery books. Marshall brought to the public an entire set of books and games that Fenn had devised to teach children to read, creating an instant home-learning programme, which, with its emphasis on advancement through education and strong moral underpinning, was perfectly tailored to the goals and aspirations of the emerging middle-classes. It is clear that from the outset of the period publishers recognised that very young children needed their own specially contrived literature. Ellenor Fenn's *Cobwebs*, shown in the title as suitable for three- to eight-year-olds, was one of the first books to provide progressive lessons for children to help them become competent readers.

2 Jill Shefrin's study, *The Dartons*, provides a comprehensive listing of the firm's prodigious output of teaching aids across a range of subjects for children of all ages, but there is no comparable study of the SPCK, or the RTS.

Fenn's reading scheme established a number of important features of nursery books, which future publishers used as a model: large well-spaced type, simple graded texts, and stories about everyday life. The development of picturebook reading in this study can be traced back to Fenn's insistence on illustrations to support the text; each generation of books moved closer towards visually oriented methods of learning (Harris's coloured picture rhymes, through to Cole's superior artist-illustrated books, to Crane's picture narratives). Fenn's educational game, which demonstrated the value of play in learning, paved the way for reading games and alphabet sets, and they became a permanent feature during the period; the influence of *Set of toys* on the marketing of educational apparatus is evident in the teaching aids produced in support of the Dale readers at the turn of the twentieth century.

John Harris, one of the most enterprising publishers operating at the start of the nineteenth century, successfully promoted a range of experimental rhyming books that encouraged the idea of young children learning to read purely for entertainment. The success of his top-selling titles showed the possibility for mass-market nursery literature and demonstrated even more effectively than John Marshall that promotional series helped to boost sales and stimulate the overall growth of the market. Harris's series of coloured picture reading books in rhyme created an entirely new subsection within the nursery market, dramatically expanding the range of books available for very young children. There were growing numbers of children as a proportion of the population, which would have increased the potential for sales exponentially.³ This new genre emerged at a time when the Romantics' discourse on childhood questioned whether moral literature would help or harm a young child's education, and indicates an important deviation from the anti-fairy tale agenda promoted by publishers like John Marshall at the end of the eighteenth century. However, as Harris continued to promote the works of successful late-eighteenth century moral writers such as Fenn, it is clear that he was not adopting a revolutionary stance with his new-style books; he was a pragmatic entrepreneur exploring new ways to expand his business.

Henry Cole's Home Treasury series was similarly launched against the backdrop

³ From 1750 there was an upward trend in the child population; by 1826 the number of children under fifteen was 1,120 for every 1,000 adults. See Margaret Kinnell, 'Publishing for Children 1700-1780', p. 29.

of heated debate concerning the effects of science-based education and its lack of imaginative content, which echoed through the nineteenth century like a guiding mantra. The editing of *Cobwebs* by the SPCK for Sunday School use, as well as the RTS's adoption of its formula to create a Peter Parley-style religious reader occurred during a brief resurgence of overtly didactic publications, in which Evangelical literature predominated. Cole's wholesale rejection of such literature helped to direct the nursery market into the next phase of its development. As the first children's editor, 'Felix Summerly', Cole consolidated the nursery canon, bringing together fairy tales, modern stories, nursery rhymes, fables, myths and other classics, to create a complete nursery library that accentuated the importance of imaginative rather than rationalist literature, thus embracing the European tradition of children's literature, while seeking to counteract the influence of the American Goodrich ('Peter Parley') in the English nursery. The Home Treasury series set new standards for the design and illustration of children's books, with its use of acclaimed artists and superior printing and binding. Attuned to Victorian interest in art and architecture, it was novel in its aim to cultivate aesthetic awareness in children as they learned to read, encouraging a more discerning audience for children's books among both parents and children.

Walter Crane's well-designed books followed almost seamlessly in the wake of Cole's series. Crane and his printer Edmund Evans took full advantage of technological advances in colour reproduction and print machinery to create artistic colour-printed toy books designed for the mass-market, although it is interesting to note that they favoured Bewick's wood-engraving technique over the modern chromolithographic method of production. Artistic flair was essential to achieve the best results; technology alone did not ensure high standards of art and design, a fact that Cole had already proved in his earlier experiments with print techniques. Crane's imaginative series of Baby books, and experimental educational titles, opened up a significant new sector within the nursery market, attracting many imitations of his innovative designs.

The children's publishing market was continually alive to innovation and experimentation, even though publishers were often risk averse. As demonstrated

in the case of *Cobwebs*, *The butterfly's ball*, *Mother Hubbard*, *Nursery songs* and the Routledge toy books, publishers proceeded cautiously, starting with small print runs of a few thousand copies for new titles and reprinting if brisk sales indicated demand. However, the many imitations of these books demonstrate the powerful influence that successful innovations exerted in the nursery market, setting new trends, stimulating competition and expanding overall sales. Nevertheless, while the boost given to the market by popular titles such as *The butterfly's ball* was important for development of mass-marketing within the nursery sector, the literary quality of such books was also essential to their survival; many of the 'papillonades' fell by the wayside because they were poor imitations of Roscoe's original poem. This underlines the fact that publishers needed skill in picking winning authors and illustrators. It wasn't simply a question of making the books available.

Publishers played a vital role in the distribution of children's books and the development of an international market. *Cobwebs*' translation into French before 1800 shows children's publishers were cultivating trade beyond the English market from an early stage. As Cole's promotion of fairy tales and his rejection of 'Peter Parley' highlights, the European and American literature enriched the English nursery canon and stimulated competition. The pirating and imitation of books like *Cobwebs* by American publishers helped to stimulate growth of their own nursery market and by the latter quarter of the nineteenth century it was common for titles to be issued simultaneously in London and New York, as Crane's books published by Routledge, Cassell, Warne and John Lane demonstrate.

Parents, too, had a role in the shaping of the nursery market. It is evident that while some parents were receptive to new styles of literature that might educate and amuse their children, others retained a loyalty and affection for books they enjoyed when they were learning to read themselves (although we cannot discount the possibility that parents might have purchased both old- and new-style books). The example of *Cobwebs*, the most remarkable among many long-running nursery titles, indicates that the passing down of well-loved nursery books through the generations was instrumental in the building of profitable backlists. The continuing charm of *Mother*

Hubbard, The butterfly's ball and *Baby's opera* is witness to the timeless character of some of the most successful books. From this secure sales base publishers could risk the launch of radical new-style titles. This indicates the market was always ripe for experiment, but that publishers simultaneously resisted change by establishing nursery classics to ensure the profitability of their business. The developing nursery market thus proved to be as conservative as it was revolutionary.

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A cross-disciplinary approach, embracing literature, social and cultural history, the history of education, art history and the history of the book – a research process referred to by McKenzie as ‘bibliography as a sociology of texts’ – has enabled construction of a broad picture of this complex area of children’s book history with its myriad influences.¹⁰ The growth of the nursery market between 1783 and 1900 was principally driven by requirements for early education, social acculturation, as well as entertainment, but it is evident that publishers could surprise the market with unexpected treats such as *The butterfly’s ball*. Ellenor Fenn’s idea that amusement might be the ‘vehicle of instruction’ held true throughout the period, but proved to be a shifting concept. A copy of *Cobwebs* and an exciting reading game proved an entertaining means to reading accomplishment for late eighteenth-century children. Harris’s colour-illustrated books of amusing rhyme books offered a new style of book that could be collected in sets. By the 1840s it was possible for parents to provide children with a complete library of nursery literature illustrated with the drawings of old masters and the most accomplished artists of the day. In the mid- to late-Victorian period children could learn to read through beautifully designed picturebooks at home, and by the very end of the century these colour-illustrated books were even available in the school classroom. Writing in his 1897 retrospective on children’s books in *The Imprint*, Gleeson White noted that the improvement in children’s books since the late eighteenth century was due to the artist and publisher:

[...] the child occupies a new place in the world to-day. Excepting possibly certain royal infants, we do not find that great artists of the past addressed themselves to children.¹¹

Fenn, Harris and Cole all considered that pictures were central to children’s enjoyment of books and their success in reading, but Crane was one of the greatest exponents of the new view of childhood that emerged by the end of the nineteenth century. Writing in his preface to *The song of sixpence picture book* (1909), he

¹⁰ McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts*, p. 28. See also Chapters One and Six for my implementation of this theory.

¹¹ White, ‘Children’s Books’, p. 6.

playfully commented that even ‘princesses’ could not do without alphabet books and offered his toy-book compilation as a pretty dish to set before ‘their Babyships’.¹²

Ultimately, it was Crane’s visual theories that had the greatest influence on young children’s early education at the end of the nineteenth century, shaping their experience of learning to read both at home and in the classroom and opening up new opportunities for publishers in the nursery market.

¹² Walter Crane, *The song of sixpence picture book* (London and NY: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1909).

APPENDIX ONE

The ‘Papillonades’

This list relates to *The Butterfly’s ball* section in Chapter Two. It gives details of the many imitations of the title, dubbed by Jackson as the ‘papillonades’, that were issued following the immediate success of Roscoe’s first title. I have examined some of the books in the V&A National Art Library and others in the British Library. For the remainder my sources are mainly Marjory Moon, *John Harris’s Books for Youth*, Mary Jackson, *Engines of Instruction Mischief and Magic* and Darton, *Children’s Books in England*.

The main list comprises titles published by John Harris, some in association with other booksellers or publishers. Another list follows giving titles produced in imitation by different publishers. Titles are listed in date order, followed by number of editions (where known). The author (where known) is then listed, followed by the illustrator (where known) in brackets. If the title was included in Harris’s Cabinet that is noted. References in Moon, Jackson and Darton are also given.

Harris titles (some with others)

1807

The butterfly’s ball (1 Jan 1807); Roscoe; (Mulready); [21st edn by 1841]; Moon 725.

The peacock’s “at home” (1 Sept? 1807); Dorset; (Mulready); [24th by 1854]; Moon 214.

The elephant’s ball (5 Dec 1807); W. B.; (Mulready); [2]; Moon 32.

The butterfly’s ball [... and] *A winter’s day. By Mr Smith* (1807); (Mulready); [3 edns; 5 x by 1819];

2nd Cabinet; Moon 726.

The lion’s masquerade (10 Dec? 1807); Dorset; (Mulready); [3]; 1st Cabinet; Moon 214.

1808.

The court of Pegasus (1808); Jackson p. 213.

The fishes grand gala (I: Jan and II: Feb 1808); Mrs Cockle; (Mulready); [1]; Moon 146;

(with C.Chapple; B. Tabart; Darton and Harvey).

The feast of fishes; or The whale's invitation, (1 Feb? 1808); Teresa Tyro; (Maria Flaxman); [2];

1st Cabinet; Moon 939; Jackson, p. 213.

Flora's gala (10 Mar 1808); [1]; 1st Cabinet, (cited in Darwin's *Botanic Garden*); Moon 291.

The horse's levee (4 Feb? 1808); [1]; 1st Cabinet; Moon 384.

The lioness's ball (n.d. c. 1808); [1]; Moon 486; (with C. Chapple, B. Tabart, Darton and Harvey).

The lioness's rout (1808); (with Tabart and Co.); [1]; Moon 487.

The lobster's voyage (1808); [1]; Moon 504; (Mulready); (with B. Crosby & Co.); Darton, p. 201.

The rose's breakfast (1808); [1]; Moon 729.

Grand-mamma: or, The christening (1808); [1]; Moon 327.

The council of dogs (1808); [1]; Moon 166.

The butterfly's birthday [by A. D. M.], *St. Valentine's day, and Madame Whale's ball* (1808); [1];

Moon 509 (not same title as 727).

The whales's invitation to his brethren of the deep (1808); Jackson, p. 213.

The Christning [sic] '*not At Home*' (1808); Jackson, p. 213.

1809

The butterfly's birth-day (n.d. 1809?); William Roscoe; [1]; Moon 727 (not same title as 509);

Jackson, 213.

Lady Grimalkin's concert and supper (1809); [1]; Moon 467.

The rose's breakfast (1808); Jackson, p. 213

The peacock at home; and other poems (1809); Dorset; [1]; (with John Murray; Manners and Miller);

Moon 216.

The mermaid "at home" (1809); [1]; Moon 538.

The poetic garland, 4 vols (1809); Vol III: *Butterfly's Ball / Winter's day; Butterfly's birthday;*

Peacock "at home"; Elephant's ball; Lion's masquerade; Butterfly's ball, A. D. M.; *Feast of fishes;*

Council of dogs.

The poetic garland, 4 vols (1809); Vol IV: *Rose's breakfast; Horse's levee; Flora's gala; + unrelated*

title; [1]; Moon 666, pp. 95, 185.

The Peacock and the parrot and their search for the author of the Peacock at home, (1816); Dorset;

Jackson 213.

The peacock and parrot on their tour (10 Dec? 1816); [not Dorset as stated]; [1]; 1st Cabinet; Moon 605.

The Peacock "at home" / added Butterfly's ball (1822) [6 by 1834]; 2nd Cabinet; Moon 217.

John Harris junior

The Peacock 'at home' / Butterfly's ball / Fancy fair; or Grand gala at zoological gardens (1838);

(Mulready, modified from *The butterfly's ball*); [2]; Moon 218.

The fancy fair; or Grand gala at the zoological gardens (1838); Jackson, p. 213.

Other publishers

The eagle's masque. By "Tom Tit" (J. Mawman, c. 1807; 2nd ed 1808); Jackson, p. 213.

The butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast (G. Thompson, 1808).

The butterfly's funeral; a sequel to the Butterfly's ball and the grasshopper's feast

(Wallis, 1808); J. L. B.

The jackdaw "at home" (Didier and Tebbett, 1808).

Lion's parliament (J. B. Batchelor, 1808).

Tyger's theatre (B. Tabart, 1808); S. J. Arnold; Darton, p. 201.

The water-king's levee; or the gala of the lake (W. Lindsell, 1808); Jackson, p. 213.

The wedding among the flowers (Darton and Harvey, 1808); Anne Taylor.

La fete de la rose (Montgomery; Longman's, 1809; Tabart and others, 1810).

The jackdaw "at home" (A. K. Newman, 1810); Jackson, p. 213.

The peacock abroad (W. Richardson, 1812); Dorset?.

The dandy's ball (John Marshall, n.d.).

The dandy's perambulations (John Marshall, 1819).

Dandy's wedding (John Marshall, 1820).

The dandy's rout (John Marshall, 1820) written by 11-year-old Caroline Sheridan (later Norton), granddaughter of Sheridan; Opie, *A Nursery Companion*, p. 127.

Chrysallina; or, the butterfly's gala, addressed to two little girls, by R. C. Barton (T. Boys, 1820);

Jackson, p. 213.

The peahen at home; or, The swan's bridal day (J. L. Marks, c. 1840); Jackson, p. 213.

The dog's dinner party (Routledge, c. 1871); Jackson, p. 213.

APPENDIX TWO

Cobwebs Comparisons

The table on the following two pages provides a summary of the key features of the copies of *Cobwebs* shown in the Chapter Six case study. Copies are in the British Library (BL), The National Art Library at the V&A (NAL), The Institute of Education Library Special Collections (IOE) and Toronto Public Library, Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books (TPL). Apart from the TPL examples, all copies have been examined. I am grateful to Lori McLeod at TPL for supplying details and images of the covers, title pages, and illustrations for 'The morning', to enable analysis of these features.

Date: The date column also gives details of the library shelf mark for each title.

Vol: The column on volumes shows whether published as two separate volumes, or in a combined edition. Where brackets are shown the volume has not survived with its companion. Price is also given in these columns. Prices have been taken from promotional lists in Marshall publications, or from press advertisements. The combined editions of the 1820s and 1830s were two volumes bound as one, with separate pagination. Editions from the 1840s have continuous page numbers.

Publisher: The publisher is given as printed on the title page.

Pages: The initial figures in brackets indicate the number of prefatory pages. This is followed by the number of pages of dialogues in the given volume, followed in square brackets by the number of blank, or advertising pages.

Binding: Refers to whether 12mo or 8 mo, and the size of the book.

Cover: Gives a brief description of the cover details.

Frontispiece: where the frontispiece is known to have been issued, but is absent it is marked as 'wanting'.

Illustrations: noted by comparison with previous issues.

Tail-pieces: gives a brief description of their style.

Metatext: gives details of Fenn's prefatory addresses, as well as inscriptions.

COBWEBS COMPARISONS APPENDIX 2 (page two of three)

Date	Vol I	Vol II	2 in 1	Publisher	Pages	Binding (in cm)	Cover	Frontispiece	Illustration	Tail-pieces	Metatext
[1783] BL 1210.1.1.(2.) ESTC T073091 ECCO	● 1s	● 1s		John Marshall and Co.	I: (xxv) 27-94 [2] II: 87 [1]	12mo 16.5 x 10	Original boards wanting –rebound in vol. of ‘Schoolbooks’	-	Wood cut cartouches, framed with ‘um’ swag	-	‘Dedication’; ‘Advertisement’; ‘My little readers’; ‘Address to good children’ Printer’s errata Vol. II
[1789?] IOE Baines 144 [17--?]	● 1s	(●) 1s		J. Marshall and Co.	(xxvi) 27- 94 [2]	12mo 16.5 x 10	Marbled boards/ ¼ bound brown leather/ no title	N C Goodnight engravings ‘The doll p. 58’	As 1 st edn.	-	As 1 st edn. Inscription ‘1891’. Incorrectly paired with vol II next entry
[ca. 1790] [1794?] NAL 60.Z.189 (c) I IOE Baines 144 II [17--?]	● 1s	● 1s		John Marshall	I: (xxvi) 27-94 [2] II: 87 [1]	12mo 16.5 x 10	Marbled boards/ ¼ bound brown leather/ no title	N C Goodnight engravings I ‘The doll’ p. 58; II ‘The bird p. 33’	As 1 st edn.	-	As 1 st edn. Matching inscriptions ‘1794’
[ca. 1795] NAL 60.Z.189 (d)	● 1s	(●) 1s		John Marshall	I: (xviii) 19-72	12mo 16.5 x 9.5	Marbled boards/ ¼ bound brown leather/ no title	Wanting	As 1 st edn.	-	As 1 st edn.
[1799?] NAL 60.Z.189 (e) (catalogued 1783)			● 2s	John Marshall	I: (xviii) 19-72 II: 87 [1]	12mo 15 x 9.5	Marbled boards/ ¼ bound brown leather/ no title	Goodnight eng. ‘The doll p. 58’ (now p. 44)	As 1 st edn., but with ‘ram’ swag	-	As 1 st edn. Ad for <i>Set of toys</i> II: p 88
[1805?] NAL AA.FENE. CO.1805	● 1s	(●) 1s		John Marshall	I: (x) 11-64	12mo 16 x 10	Pink boards/ oval title sticker	As 1790 Faded ‘The doll p.58’ (now p. 36)	As 1 st edn. + 2 subs., but no swag	Wood cuts Bewick (nature)	As 1 st edn., but type reset
1815 NAL AA.FENE. CO.1815	● <3s	● >		Baldwin, Cradock, & Joy, and John Sharpe Juv. Library, assigned from John Marshall	I: (no nos) 19-72; II: 72 [4]	12mo 15.5 x 9.5	Pink boards/ rectangular title sticker	Wanting, or absent from both volumes	As 1 st edn. + 2 subs, as 1805	New (children & nature)	As 1 st edn., typeset as 1805
1817 NAL 60.S.44	(●) <3s	● >		Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy; N. Hailes Juv. Library; and John Marshall	I: 72 II: 72	12mo 13 X 9	Marbled boards/ ¼ bound red leather/ no title	Vol I missing	I missing; II as 1 st edn., I sub no swags	I missing; II as 1815	I missing
[1820?] BL 12835.aa.45.	●	●		John. Marshall	I: (no nos) 11-64; II: 72	12mo 16 X 10	Pink boards/oval title sticker as [1805]	New engraving of ‘The doll p. 58’ (story now p. 36)	As 1 st edn. + 2 subs, as 1805	As 1805	As 1 st edn., typeset as 1805
1822 (own collection)			● 3s	Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy; N. Hailes Juv. Library; and John Marshall	I: (xx) 21-71 [1] II: 72	12mo 14.5 x 9	Dark red roan/ gilt title		New wood cuts.	New (medieval and nature)	As 1 st edn., but type reset
1825 NAL 60.0.41 (+ own collection)			● 3s	Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy; N. Hailes, Juv. Library; and John Marshall	I: (xx) 21-71 [1]; II: 72	12mo 14.5 x 9	As 1822. Dark green roan/gilt title; light green roan/ gilt title	Replaced by TP woodcut of fly in web	As 1822 +TP illustration of web	As 1822 rearranged	As 1 st edn., typeset as 1822

COBWEBS COMPARISONS APPENDIX 2 (page three of three)

Date	Vol I	Vol II	2 in 1	Publisher	Pages	Binding (in cm)	Cover	Frontispiece	Illustration	Tail-pieces	Metatext
1833 (2 examples from own collection)			● 3s	Baldwin and Cradock	I: (no nos) 21-71; II: 72	12mo 14.5 x 9	As 1822. Dark red roan/ gilt title; dark green roan/ gilt title	As 1825	As 1822 + 1825 TP ill.	As 1825 rearranged	As 1 st edn., typeset as 1822
1837 NAL 60.F.2 NAL AAFENE. CO.1837 NAL.60.S.45			● 3s	Baldwin and Cradock	(no nos) I: 71 II: 72	12mo 14.5 x 9	As 1822. Dark red roan/ gilt title; dark green roan/ gilt title (60.S.45 rebound 14 x 9.5)	As 1825	As 1822 + 1825 TP ill.	As 1825, but different order	As 1 st edn., typeset as 1825
[1844?] BL 12836.a.15. (catalogued [c. 1860])			● 3s	SPCK	(viii) 91	8mo 14.5 x 9.5	Brown limp cloth/blind blocked/gilt title	-	New, high quality wood engravings	New (various)	Revised 'Address to good children' only; Inscription dated 1845 suggests incorrect BL date
[1852?] NAL 60.B.45.			● [3s?]	SPCK	(viii) 91	8mo 14 x 9.5	Green limp cloth/blind blocked/gilt title	-	As SPCK [1844?]		Revised 'Address to good children' only
1858 NAL AAFENE. CO.1858	●	-		Darton and Co.	63	16 x 10.5	Red limp cloth; blind blocked; gilt title decoration	New etching: Meesom (girl with cat)	As 1822	New (various)	Revised 'Advertisement' only
[ca. 1870] TPL B1LOV 1870			● 9d	Frederick Warne and Co.; Scribner and Welford NY; 'Crofton Cousins'	(iv) 104	15 x 9.5	Red cloth; black stamped; colour pictorial label	New col. lithograph	New wood cuts	Woodcuts	Revised 'Advertisement' only
[ca. 1870] TPL B1LOV 1870			● 9d	TP wanting (Frederick Warne?)	(iv) 104	15 x 9.5	Green cloth blocked in blind/gold detail	wanting	As Warne 1870	As Warne 1870	Revised 'Advertisement' only as Warne [ca 1870]
[1871] BL 12803.aaa.30.			● 6d	George Routledge and Sons (also NY)	128	8mo (no nos) 15.5 x 10	Green cloth/black tooling/ no title	New col. plate (grandmother and children)	New wood cuts	New wood cuts (various)	'Address, 'To my little readers; Author preface = revised 'Advertisement' (no 'Dedication')
[1879] BL 12809 aaa.59.			● 9d	George Routledge and Sons (also NY)	128	8mo (no nos) 15.5 x 10	Green cloth/titled col. pictorial label	Col.plate (grandmother), as 1871	As Routledge 1871	As Routledge 1871	'Address, 'To my little readers' 'Advertisement' (no 'Dedication'), as 1871
[1885] BL 12809 aaa.67.			● 1s	Crosby Lockwood and Co.	(ii) 126	8mo 16.5 x 10.5	Green cloth/black tooling, gilt title and web detail	Meesom (girl with cat), as Darton 1858	As 1822 p. 58 fp. ill. girl and doll	New wood cuts	Revised 'Advertisement' and Address' only
[1894?] TPL B1LOV 1894			●	Frederick Warne and Co.	(iv) 104	16 x 11	Blue-green boards/black, green, red decoration Gilt title panel	Col. lithograph	As Warne 1870 with framed text and pictures		Revised 'Advertisement' only as Warne [ca 1870] Inscription '1894'

APPENDIX THREE

***Cobwebs*: a check-list of editions and impressions of the title**

This list is intended as a supplement to David Stoker's 'A Preliminary List of Known Editions', *Cobwebs to Catch Flies: A Bibliographical Case Study*, Occasional Paper VII ([n.p.], The Children's Books History, 2008), pp. 15-19. I fully acknowledge Stoker's research, noting his numbered listing against entries.

For continuity of research, I have adopted the same form of listing as Stoker, noting editions, or impressions, in chronological order under publisher headings. This enables it to be used as a check-list of the various imprints, but inevitably means that some items appear out of their date order. Some of the entries, including those originally noted by Stoker, have been compiled from entries in bibliographies or catalogues. Numbers from Moon (*John Harris's Books for Youth*), or Lawrence Darton (*The Dartons: An Annotated Check-list*) are recorded against entries. Where a new edition or issue is suggested by an advertisement this is also noted in the listing, although it is accepted that such advertisements do not provide proof of publication. Nevertheless, even if advertisements only indicate a new printing, they show signs of publishing activity and therefore provide evidence of continued marketing of the title.

Stoker remarks on the typographical differences in surviving copies of early editions of *Cobwebs* published by Marshall (not noted in this brief listing), which indicate that there were more separate printings than indicated. ESTC numbers are given where they relate to specific editions (details are supplied by the holding library), but are not available for all the newly discovered examples of pre-1800 printings of the book. The difficulty of accurately dating Marshall's early editions is commented on in Chapter Six.

The listing first shows the date of publication (in square brackets where it does not appear on the title page and has been estimated by a library catalogue listing, advertisement, or my own estimation), followed by the volume number, and number of pages. Blank or advertisement pages are placed in square brackets. Then follows source of the data. I have placed an asterisk against those items that I have seen with the library shelfmark.

These items also appear in the *Cobwebs* comparison table featured in Appendix Two. The wording for the titles remained almost the same throughout its publishing history. Where publishers added a strap announcing it as ‘A new edition’ this is noted in the listing.

Cobwebs to catch flies: or, Dialogues in short sentences, adapted to children from the age of three to eight years.

London: John Marshall and Co. (1783-89)

1. *[1783], 2 vols; I: 94; II: 87 [1]; ESTC T073091; BL 1210.1.1(2.); ECCO; Stoker 1
2. [1787-1789], 2 vols; I: 94; II: pagination unknown; Stoker 2
3. [1787-1789], 2 vols; I: 72; II: 88; Stoker 3 (contains long advertisement for *Set of toys*)
4. [1787-1789], 2 vols; I: 72; II: 87 [1]; Stoker 4 lists it as ESTC N59935 [1795?] following the University of California Special Collections dating
5. *[ca. 1789], 2 vols; I: 94; IOE Baines 144 (catalogued [17--?]); *II: (unknown)
6. [1789], 2 vols; Stoker 5. Stoker lists as ESTC N26601, [1794?], following University of California Special Collections dating (incorrect for imprint)

London: John Marshall (1790-1820)

7. *[ca. 1790; 1794?], 2 vols; I: 94p; V&A NAL 60.Z.189 (c); II: 87 [1]; IOE Baines 144 (catalogued [17--?]); matching 1784 inscriptions and correct Marshall address for 1794
8. [after 1790], 2 vols; I: 72; II: 87 [1]; University of California Special Collections; ESTC N26602 dated [1783] following CLU-S/C dating (incorrect for imprint)
9. [after 1790], 2 vols; I: 72; II: 87 [1]; Pierpoint Morgan Library; University of Southern Mississippi; ESTC N26603 dated [1783] following NNPM dating (incorrect for imprint)
10. [1790-1799], 2 vols; I: pagination unknown; II: 87 [1]; Stoker 6
11. [1790-1799], 2 vols; I: 72; II: 87 [1]; Stoker 7
12. *[ca. 1795], 2 vols; I: 72; V&A NAL 60.Z.189 (d); *II: 87 [1]?
13. *[1799?], 2 vols in one; I: 72; II: 87 [1]; V&A NAL 60.Z.189 (e) (catalogued [1783])
14. [1799?], 2 vols; I: 72; II: 87 [1]; Stoker 8 (includes printer's imprint)
15. [1800?], 2 vols; Pagination not listed; Toronto Public Libraries, Metropolitan Bibliographic Centre; ESTC N59934
16. [1800?], 2 vols; I: 72; II: pagination unknown; Birmingham Central Libraries; Columbia University Teachers College; ESTC T167276

17. [c. 1800], 2 vols; I: 72; II: 87 [1]; Stoker 9 (includes printer's imprint)
18. [1800-1815], 2 vols; I: 64; II: 72; Stoker 10
19. [1800-1815], 2 vols; I: 64 [3]; II: 72; Stoker 11 (Stoker notes this "edition" is imposed in a single gathering; it is found in several states with sheets reprinted many times 1800-1815, copies sometimes made up of sheets from different printings.)
20. [c. 1804], 2 vols; I: pagination unknown; II: 87; Stoker 12
21. [1805?], 2 vols; *I: 64; V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1805; II: 87 [1]?
22. [1820?], 2 vols; I: 64; II: 87 [1]; paired as BL 12835.aa.45.

Dublin: John Rice (1794)

23. [1794], 2 vols; pagination unknown; Stoker 13; ESTC N44101

London: Elizabeth Newbery (1799)

24. [1799], *Toiles d'araignees pour attraper les mouches*, 2 vols; pagination unknown; Roscoe J129; Moon 276; Stoker 14

Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson (1807)

25. [1807]; Stoker 15. (Known from advertisement in a Johnson title.)

Philadelphia: Johnson & Warner (1813-1814)

26. [1813-14]; Stoker 16 (Known from newspaper advertisement); recorded in d'Alté. Welch, *A Bibliography of American Children's Books Printed Prior to 1821*, p. 130, no. 397.

London: Baldwin, Cradock, & Joy and John Sharpe Juvenile Library (1815-1825)

27. *1815, 2 vols (by assignment from John Marshall); I: 72; II: 72 [4]; paired as V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1815 (REN); Stoker 17
28. *1817, 2 vols (with John Marshall); I: 72; *II: 72; V&A NAL 60.S.44; Stoker 18
29. 1819, 2 vols (with John Marshall); Advertised in *The Morning Chronicle* 23 January 1919. May be a reprint of 1817 (see Stoker 17)
30. *1822, 2 vols, or 2 vols in one; (with John Marshall); I: 71 [1]; II: 72; own copy; Stoker 19
31. *1825, A new edn, 2 vols in one (with John Marshall); I: 71 [1]; II: 72; V&A NAL 60.O.41 and own copy; Stoker 20 (lists as 'Revised and enlarged')

Providence, RI: Miller & Hutchens, (1819)

32. 1819, [*Cobwebs*] *The Columbian spelling book, and children's friend*; American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA. (I am grateful to Charlotte Mitchell for locating this edition.)

Philadelphia: Robert Desilver (1825)

33. 1825, 2 vols in one; 108; Stoker 21

Baltimore: E. J. Coale (1825)

34. 1825, 2 vols in one; 108; Stoker 22

New York: Mahlon Day (1832-1837)

35. 1832, 2 vols in one; 102; Stoker 23
 36. 1832, 2 vols in one; 105 [2]; Stoker 24
 37. 1837, A new edn; 2 vols in one; 105; Stoker 25

London: Baldwin & Cradock (1829-1842)

38. [1829], 2 vols (with John Sharpe JL and John Marshall); pagination unknown; Stoker 26
 39. *1833, A new edn; 2 vols in one; I: 71; II: 72; Stoker 27
 40. *1837, 2 vols in one; I: 71; II: 72; V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1837 (RC); V&A NAL 60.F.2; V&A NAL 60.S.45; Stoker 28
 41. 1841, 2 vols in one; I: 71; II: 72; Stoker 29
 42. [1842], A new edition; 1 vol; Known from advertisement in *The Examiner*, 23 April 1842

New York: Mahlon Day, and Baker, Crane & Co. (1842)

43. 1842, Stoker 30 (still being advertised in 1847)

London: Darton & Co. (1842-1858)

44. [1842], New edition; 2 vols; I: 63; II: 64; Stoker 31
 45. [1845-1847?], New edition; 2 vols in one; Stoker 32
 46. 1852, New edn, 2 vols; I: 63; II: 64; Stoker 33; Darton H582 [2nd series]
 47. [1850-57], New edn; 2 vols; I: 63; II: 64; Darton H583 (1)
 48. *1858, New edn.; 2 vols, I: 63; II: 64; V&A NAL AA.FENE.CO.1858 (REN); I: 64; Stoker 34;
 Darton H581

49. 1858, A new edn; 2 vols; I: 63; II: 64; Darton H583 (2)

London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (1844-1860)

50. *[1844], 2 vols in one; 91; (catalogued [c. 1860]); Stoker 35 (BL 12836.a.15. appears to have this edition incorrectly dated [1860]. See the entry below)

51. *[1852?], A new edn; 2 vols in one; V&A NAL 60.B.45

52. [c. 1849], New edition; 2 vols in one; 91; Stoker 36

53. [1860], 2 vols in one; 91; BL 12836.a.15. (but could represent 1844 edn; inscription dated 1845)

London: Cradock & Co. (1848-9)

54. [1848], 1 vol; (known from advertisement in *The Standard* 25 July 1848)

New York: C. S. Francis & Co.; Boston: J. S. Francis & Co (1851)

55. [1851], 1 vol 120; Stoker 37

London: Lockwood & Co. (c. 1863-1871)

56. [c. 1866], New edn; 2 vols, or 2 vols in one; Stoker 38

57. [c. 1871], A new edn; 2 vols in one; Stoker 39

London: Frederick Warne and Co. (1870-1894), and New York: Scribner Welford and Co.)

58. [ca. 1870], 2 vols in one; 104; TPL OC: BI LOV 1870; Stoker 40

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